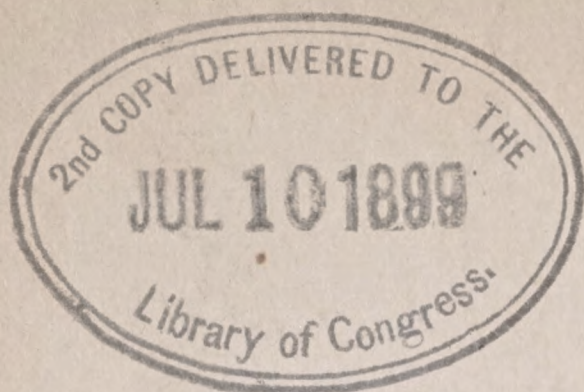


KATE FORD'S FAMILY.

BY SUSIE JEWETT HOWE.

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KATE FORD'S FAMILY



BY

SUSIE JEWETT HOWE



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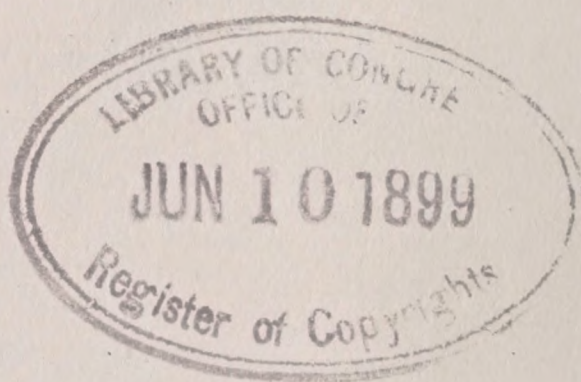
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38417
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This book is affectionately dedicated
to my sister
ELIZABETH D. JEWETT,
my dearest friend
as an appreciation of her perseverance
and energy.

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KATE FORD'S FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

The Awakening of Kate Ford.

“Please Mis’ Ray, ma wants to borrow a pail of flour. We’ll get some Sat’d day and pay you then.”

“Yes, in a moment,” answered a voice, “sit down and wait until I get the biscuit in the oven. I will be out directly.”

“Yes’m,” and with a thud the girl dropped into the nearest chair by the kitchen door, and setting the large pail down by her side vainly endeavored to hide her bare brown feet behind the rounds of the chair, while she waited for Mrs. Ray to get the flour. The door into the sitting-room opened presently, and a tall spare woman came out, knitting a blue stocking, the ball of which rolled from her hand across the floor to the girl’s chair, who, however, made no move to pick it up, but kicked it along toward its owner, smiling mischievously as she saw the pretty tangle it had made in the yarn.

The woman picked it up hastily, and casting

a look of disgust at the girl asked icily : "How's your folks to-day, Kate?"

"O! pretty well, I guess," the girl replied lightly, "all but ma; she's got a lame back. Another crick."

"Seems to me she's allus havin' cricks, aint she? What's your pa a-doin'? hustlin' about his spring work, I suppose," this with a touch of irony which did not escape the girl's quick ear. She flushed angrily, and retorted quickly :

"I do not know as it is any of your concerns, Mis' Grimes, what pa's a-doin'. He minds his own business, and that's more than some of the neighbors do."

Mrs. Grimes scowled fiercely, but made no reply. Mrs. Ray, coming out of the pantry, endeavored to hide a smile as she placed the biscuit in the oven, then asking the girl into the pantry she carefully weighed out the flour, calling in her husband to see if it was correct to the last ounce. With a "Thank you," Kate took the flour and started for the door, but paused long enough to ask if there was any mail.

"Mr. Downs went awhile ago," was the reply; and without waiting to say good-bye she darted from the door and sped down the road toward her home. She had gone but a short distance, when on hearing the sound of wheels she looked back and saw Mr. Downs driving away from Mr. Ray's house. "I'll go back and see if there's any mail," she thought, and climbing over the fence, she made her way over the freshly ploughed garden-plat to the back of the house.

She paused a moment to take breath before going in, and heard her name spoken angrily in Mrs. Grimes' high rasping voice.

"That Kate Ford is the worst tom-boy of a girl I ever see. She hasn't any sense or bringin' up at all. She's the sassiest piece in town."

"Well, how can she have any manners?" assented Mrs. Ray. "The poor child is a law unto herself. Her mother has no control over her at all, and her father never tries to have; and she will not listen to anyone. I am sorry for the children for they have no bringing up."

Kate turned a deep crimson at those words. Her heart beat well-nigh as if it would burst, but creeping a little nearer she forced herself to listen to what was said. Mrs. Grimes began again:

"Of course they have no bringing up, nor no manners either. They're a worthless, shiftless lot, the hull tribe of 'em and that Kate is the worst of 'em all. If all the likin's I have for that tribe could be put into a bag and shook up, there wouldn't be enough to put in a thimble. Did you ever see such a lookin' house in all your life?"

"Well, it is pretty dusty," agreed Mrs. Ray.

"Dusty!" Mrs. Grimes fairly shrieked. "I should say as much. There ain't a clean place in the house. Not as it is really filthy, but it is all topsy-turvey and confusion, and such a goin' on of rack and ruin I never see. Why, when they came here five years ago they had things pretty well fixed, much better than the rest of

us had, and now look at 'em. There haint a hull piece of furniture in the house, and hardly as much as a hull dish, I might say, and I don't believe they have a square meal of vittels once a year; and as for a decent garment there aint one of 'em from old Ford himself to that squalling Irene has such a thing."

"I know it is all as you say, Mis' Grimes," Kate heard Mrs. Ray answer, "but I'd do something for Kate if she would let me. I really like her. She is the smartest one in the family I think. I wish she had stayed for the mail. There's a lot of it here."

"Yes, a lot more papers for that Minnie, and for Ford too; that's all they do, is to read. I don't believe that lazy trollop of a Minnie ever thinks there's anything to do but read and study and a likely amount of good it will ever do her. Nobody that knows the Fords would ever hire her to teach a school; and Ford himself is such a fool that he would not know his family was starving if he only had a book before his nose."

"But Minnie is a quiet girl, and folks say she is smart to study. She corresponds for the papers and of course gets them that way," was Mrs. Ray's answer.

Mrs. Grimes sniffed:

"Yes, she gets the news, that's true enough. Everybody she sees she asks them to tell her the news, and as true as I live, Mrs. Ray, there aint a worse gossip in all this Higgins district than that Mis' Ford. Why every time I go there, she has some gossip to tell me that Mis' Downs

has said, and Mis' Downs says it is jest the same every time *she* goes there. Her tongue's allus running either about the neighbors or about Ford himself, and I guess she gives it to him about right, too."

The girl under the window held her breath to listen. She was quivering with indignation at every word that was uttered. The old adage, that listeners never hear any good of themselves, was true in this case, but she remained motionless while the woman went on :

"I know folks tell that she is sick, but I believe that it is more than half put on, and that she could work some if she tried, or else set that great lazy Minnie and tom-boy Kate at work, so their house would not look so much like a hog-pen. Now I am sick all the time and you aint well either, Mis' Ray, but there aint either of us but what does a lot of work every day, and if she want such a tattler and complainer she could too; or as I was a sayin, make them girls do it. Why, when my two girls were their age they knew enough to do all the work and do it well too, and I don't believe that Kate Ford knows enough to wash a mess of dishes clean; all she knows is to tramp in the woods, ride horse or drive team like any boy, while all she ever does in the house is to take care of that miserable little young'un, Irene, who yells all the time she isn't there."

"Yes, yes, Mrs. Grimes," interrupted Mrs. Ray, "I know all that, but as I said before, the children have never had any bringing up, and so

they are not so much to blame; and Mrs. Ford certainly isn't well. Why, the doctor said, when Irene was born, two years ago, that he did not believe she would ever be able to do much again."

"Tush! then she might have set that lazy Kate to work. Did you hear how she spoke to-night when I asked her about her father? How I wanted to box her ears—the little huzzy. She knows it is true that her father is too lazy to work, and that precious Kirt, her twin, is another. All he knows is that old fiddle. He is too lazy to breathe. The boys call him 'The Fiddling Parson' and a good name it is too; and that young'un Bessie, allus taggin' at his heels, will be just such a good for nothing as the rest. That tribe ought to be run out of town, Mis' Downs, and I was talkin' of writing' to the Home for Destitute Children and see if they wouldn't do somethin' to prevent them children from growin' up like the rest of the Fords. Mis' Downs says, says she—"

But Kate did not want to hear any more. Take the children! The thought was too dreadful, and with a smothered cry she sprang up from behind the rain barrel which had given her a good shelter during the tirade, and darted across the field for home.

Once out of sight of the house she sat down to think over the dreadful things she had heard. Was it possible that they were as bad as that woman had said. She knew they were not like other folks, but she had always laid it to their

being poor; but the bitter words she had heard had opened her eyes, and forcing back the tears and sobs, she quieted herself as best she could and walked slowly homewards.

The door of the little hot kitchen was open, as she entered and stood for a moment silently comparing it with Mrs. Ray's tidy kitchen. At the table sat the family eating a very spare meal of Johnny-cake, boiled eggs and milk; the mother alone having a cup of tea. The table Kate noticed with a pang, was untidily set; the dishes were either broken or cracked, the knives and forks discolored with many stains; while the floor, besides being littered with paper and shavings, was strewn with broken egg shells. The cracked and rickety stove smoked badly; and through the open door into the pantry, she could see the same disorder; the dishes and pans piled hit-or-miss upon the shelves interspersed with pans of milk and plates of broken food.

She took it all in at a glance. "It must be so," she thought, "that we are just like pigs; just as Mis' Grimes said, but I'll show her that if I'm a tom-boy I can do something some day."

Striding into the pantry she set the pail on the shelf with a jerk, jarring some of the flour out on the untidy floor as she did so, and coming out she slammed the door behind her; then after throwing her hat into the corner she drew up a rickety chair and sat down at the table; but recollecting herself instantly, she got up,

picked up her hat, and hung it on a nail; then seated herself again at the table.

“Whew!” whistled her twin brother, amused at this extraordinary proceeding, “our Katy-did is getting neat. Hope the streak will last.”

The girl made no reply but passed her plate for some of the Johnny-cake. Her older sister Minnie asked her if there was any mail.

“Mis’ Ray said Mr. Downs had gone for it,” she answered evasively.

“Seems to me you were gone a pretty long time for the flour, wa’n’t you,” began the mother querulously, “Irene has screamed nearly all the time you’ve been gone. I wish next time you are not coming back right away you would take her with you. She is too much for me with my poor health.”

“I couldn’t come any quicker,” she answered briefly, and then rose from the table, feeling as if she would break down, if obliged to eat another mouthful. The baby threw up her arms to be taken, and lifting her from her chair she went out doors, and seating herself upon a log, rocked the child to sleep while she pondered bitterly over what she had heard.

CHAPTER II.

Kate as Housekeeper.

She sat by herself for nearly an hour; long after the sturdy little limbs had grown quiet, and the child's soft breathing against her cheek told the elder sister that the little one was fast asleep.

The soft May twilight deepened into night, but she still sat there thinking gloomily of what she had heard, while her mind went back in a swift retrospect over the five years they had lived in that neighborhood. She recalled with distinctness their pleasant, comfortable home in Pennsylvania, presided over by her father's sister, Eliza; of her death, then her father's subsequent determination to move West to the land of opportunities, where he would stand a chance with the best of them in politics, and not be under the rule of "party bosses." She knew that this home had been sold at a sacrifice, that her father had come to that county with considerable money, had located on that piece of land, thinking he would make a fortune out of the timber; but the title was in some way defective, how she did not understand, but she knew that they had stead-

ily grown poorer all of the time since living there; that her father had gone heavily into politics but was on the losing ticket in the county; that after having been nominated for several of the public offices and having lost them all, he had given up in despair, and had settled down in utter discouragement, eking out a bare hand-to-mouth existence for himself and family. But that was not the worst of it all, the young girl realized with a sigh; for the mother did little but revile her husband for the misfortunes which had overtaken the family; and when he was out of the house complained about her poor health, doing the work in a slipshod manner, until, as Kate now keenly realized, the house was not fit to be seen, hardly to live in.

"I wonder I never thought of it before," she said to herself, "or why Minnie never did; but Minnie is so wrapped up in books that she does not see anything but them; and as for me, here I am nearly fifteen and all I know is just the horses and helping pa; I do believe it is just as Mis' Grimes said, that I don't know enough to wash a mess of dishes. I wonder when I did such a thing. But any way I know I'm going to try and see if I can't make things look some better." She arose with the baby in her arms and started for the house; her father came out hastily before she reached the door, and she heard her mother call shrilly:

"If you had stayed in politics where you belonged, Andrew Ford, Kate wouldn't of had such tantrums and I could do something with her."

"She's been scolding about me," muttered the girl; "poor pa; she doesn't give him a minute's peace night or day; but somebody will have a tantrum if she doesn't let me go ahead and do something to make the house look better."

Her mother began as soon as she entered: "That's just like you, Kate, staying out to this time with that baby; she'll have the croup from being out in the night air. I wanted you called in but your father said to let you alone."

"The baby is all right, ma. It isn't the first time she has been got to sleep out doors and she never had the croup yet. Got the dishes washed, Minnie?"

Her sister looked up in surprise from the table where she sat studying. "Yes; and the floor swept. I wish ma would not let the children litter so much; I have to clean every night, and I need to study all the time I can get."

"I am sure I couldn't help it," replied the mother fretfully. "Kate was gone and Irene won't mind me at all; and she and Bess have to do something to amuse themselves. I am sure that you older children were never half the trouble these younger ones are."

Kate went upstairs and put the baby on the bed; when she came down her brother asked her mischievously what she meant by asking Minnie about the dishes.

"Nothing, only I thought I would wash them myself, that's all!" she answered coolly. Her words were greeted with shouts of laughter.

"*You* wash them; why Kate Ford, I don't

believe you know how! I never could get you to do them no matter how bad I wanted to study. What has come over you?"

"Well, I've always had enough to do I guess, helping pa, without washing dishes," the girl retorted, "anyway, I've made up my mind to learn. You needn't whistle, Kirt, I'll show you that I can wash dishes if I want to, just as well as I can saw wood with pa. Have you got Bessie to sleep?"

"Yes, long ago," the boy replied, getting up from the corner where he had been sitting with the sleeping four year old child in his arms, "and if the bed is ready I will put her in it, then go to bed myself, as I want to feel rested when you begin your dish-washing to-morrow."

"And so do I," laughed Minnie; "it will be an item worth putting in the paper."

Kate colored angrily, and retorted hotly: "I'll tell you something some of these days, Minnie Ford, which will open your eyes a little;" and bursting into tears she rushed from the room and flinging herself upon her bed sobbed bitterly.

"Kate's in another tantrum," said the mother peevishly. "It seems to me that she gets worse and worse every day."

"She has something on her mind, I know well enough," Minnie replied slowly. "I wonder what it is. Something unusual has happened or she would not have wanted to wash dishes."

"We'll know fast enough," rejoined Kirt; "it won't be twenty-four hours before she will tell us. Perhaps Mrs. Ray lectured her about not doing any housework."

Mrs. Ford's wrath kindled at his words. "Mrs. Ray, indeed! she is a mean, meddlesome woman; and I'd thank her to let my Kate alone. She never comes here but she tells me something I ought to do; just as if I did not know how to work as well as she does."

"I cannot study with this noise going on," said Minnie, closing her book. "I am going to bed too. Good-night, Kirt, good-night, mama," and without more ado she left the room, followed immediately by Kirt. Mrs. Ford soon followed their example, and a few moments later Mr. Ford came in, and soon this much talked about household was asleep.

Kate woke a little later than usual, and lay for a few moments looking about her, comparing the shabby, untidy little chamber with Mrs. Ray's bedrooms. Little Irene lay sleeping sweetly by her side, while in Minnie's bed, across the room, slept Bessie. Minnie was already down stairs; and she could hear her helping about the breakfast.

"It beats everything," she thought, "that I never noticed how things looked before. This room is all topsy-turvy like the rest," and she looked in disgust at the torn dusty old carpet, the soiled beds, the cluttered chairs, and her clothing and the children's in heaps on the floor where they had been thrown the night before. There was nothing in order in the room but the little table in front of the bare, uncurtained window, through which a hot May sun was streaming, for the table was Minnie's charge, and on

it were piled her little wealth of school books and papers in good order, and woe to the little fingers when they dared disturb her treasures.

"Minnie's table is the only thing in order here," she said aloud, as she began dressing, "and this room is as much mine to keep in order as it is hers; but I have left it for her to do, as I've had enough to do outside; but she hasn't much time, in school all the time as she is, so Kate Ford, you're going to put this room in order to-day and keep it so. Do you hear?"

This latter remark she addressed to her image reflected in the broken looking-glass which Minnie had fastened up against the logs, and pinching herself vigorously to give further emphasis to the remark, she looked into Kirt's room as she passed through it in going down stairs. The same disorder was there; on the logs hung his fishing-tackle and gun, together with sundry traps, while on a small table at the foot of the bed lay his dearly beloved violin and harmonica. The boy lay asleep with a smile on his face. Kate kissed him lightly. "Dear Kirt, you are the only Saint in the family," she whispered; then fearing he would wake she hurried down the stairs.

Minnie was taking up the breakfast while her mother was fretfully setting the table, complaining all the time of her back. Kate responded quietly to Minnie's "good morning," and then telling her mother to sit down, she proceeded to lay the table herself, much to Minnie's surprise, who asked Kate if she was sick, the reason why she did such an extraordinary thing.

"No, not sick, but I told you last night I was going to work, and I want to have something to look like other folkses tables if I can," she answered, as she placed the plates carefully around the square table, and put on the knives and forks.

"Then we'll have to have something to eat like other people. Ever since your father gave up his politics and turned bushwhacker we have never had anything fit to eat. I don't see why he don't provide better. Now when I was a girl at home I never knew what it was not to have the table loaded with everything good to eat, and here its only salt pork and potatoes, and sometimes not even that; now if your father—"

"Do stop!" Kate interrupted her mother angrily; "pa does just as well as he can; he can't buy things when he hasn't anything to buy with, and if you would not scold all the time he would do better. Come Minnie, I have got the table set and you put on the potatoes and Johnny-cake and I will get the milk, then we'll have breakfast."

Mrs. Ford took her seat, complaining of the poor fare. Minnie sat down with a book in her lap, and ate slowly while studying her lesson. Kate sat by her father who ate silently, paying no attention to his wife's stream of fretful words. Kate thought rapidly through the meal, and resolved to tell her trouble to Minnie and Kirt as soon as they could be alone. The boy came down before the meal was over and took his seat silently at the table. He brought Bessie down in his arms and attended to her breakfast himself;

for the dearest love of his heart was the brown-eyed little girl who was his constant companion both out of doors and in.

The meal over, Mrs. Ford wrapped herself in a shawl and sat down by the stove. Kirt, followed by Bessie, took his violin and went out of doors; Mr. Ford went to the barn, and Kate hearing Irene cry went up stairs to her charge, while Minnie began picking up the dishes.

The little one laughed when her sister appeared, and Kate proceeded to dress her in the one clean garment she possessed. Then she looked about the room and sighed at its untidy appearance. She opened the windows, then took off the bed-clothes of the three beds to let them air, as she had seen Mrs. Ray do; but the feather-beds were full and heavy and it was a long time before she could beat them into any kind of shape. When she went downstairs, Minnie stood by the table dreamily washing the dishes with her open physiology on a pile of plates before her, while the dish-water trickled from the plates and ran in puddles on the soiled, ragged carpet.

Kate had seen all this before many times, but had never fully realized it. Now she was disgusted, and placing the baby in her chair with a cup of milk before her, she seized a pan from the shelf, whisked Minnie's book from the plates on the floor, slammed the plates into the pan, and scalded herself while pouring water from the tea-kettle over them.

"You ought to be ashamed, Minnie Ford," she cried angrily, smarting with the pain of her

burned hand, "to let the dish-water run in puddles on the floor. I am sure this old carpet is dirty enough already."

"And you ought to be ashamed too, Kate Ford, to slam my book on the floor this way," retorted Minnie picking it up. "I am sure it is hard enough to get books without having them thrown around this way, and besides, if you are going to help with the dishes I wish you would not act so much like an elephant. Look out! you can't wipe three plates at once. There they go!" as the plates dropped from the girls inexperienced fingers and fell in pieces on the floor.

Without a word Kate bent and picked up the fragments while her mother scolded petulantly about her carelessness; but for once she had nothing to say, and during the rest of the dish-washing she covertly watched Minnie and concluded that after all perhaps her sister knew more about such work than she did. When the last dish was put away and the table wiped dry she took the baby in her arms and went out doors.

Kirt sat under the great hemlock which shaded the kitchen door, and softly drew the bow across the violin. Little Bessie stood beside him singing in a sweet childish voice the melody which he played.

He was a beauty loving child of Nature, a dreamer, a musician and an idler. His heart went out in music and thanksgiving to his Maker when the first white blossoms lifted their heads above the soil and the grass grew green in the

meadows. He listened entranced to the song of the birds building their nests; it was then that the sweet strains of music which floated from under his bow grew gay, and the soul of the musician went out in a sweet wild chord akin to the song of the birds. All was beautiful in Nature to him, and his great dreamy eyes shone with love and admiration, as Spring blossomed into Summer, and Summer ripened into Autumn and Autumn faded into Winter.

But when the Storm King raged in his fury and the great trees waved and tottered in the blast, his song changed with the elements, and as fiercer waved the tempest, wilder and more pathetic grew his notes, until he seemed to be playing the Song of the Wind; and this was Kirt,—the dreamer of the forest,—an artist in his line; a boy whom few understood and whom all called indolent, all but Kate, who idolized her brother.

There was no task she would not undertake, hoping to save him from the criticism of others. She often wished in her heart that Kirt would take an interest in the work and try to help her father, but to hear anyone speak complainingly of him was harder for her to bear than to receive a rebuke herself; and so she had shielded him from her earliest recollection; and no one had ever held sway over her rebellious little heart as Kirt had done. He soothed the wild passions of her nature, and cheered her on to better endeavor. To her, his music was a language that spoke of a nobler, wider life than the narrow ignorant way she trod.

Minnie, seeing Kate going slowly toward Kirt followed her. The boy smiled at the troubled look on his sister's face, and drawing the bow softly across the strings, sang:

"Speak and let the worst be known,
Speaking may relieve you."

Minnie laughed but Kate burst out vehemently with,—

"If that meddlesome old Mother Grimes ever comes here again, I shall set the dog on her."

Kirt said nothing, but Minnie said dryly: "So that's what ails you, is it. I did not know you had seen her. What is it now?"

And Kate began angrily amid a flood of tears and related the whole dish of gossip which had reached her ears. "And I would not care so much if she had not called you Kirt, the 'Fiddling Parson' and said you were lazy; and then that about taking the children, is what almost drives me crazy," she added.

"I do not see how they could take the children," her sister answered quietly, "but it is true enough what she said about ma's gossiping and not keeping the house anyway; but she won't let me do anything, and I have tried so many times to fix things up, but I don't know how and she won't let me do what I do know how to do, and so—"

"I know all that," broke in Kate, "but as I told you last night I am going to be housekeeper and do something. You'll see."

"Will you wash dishes?" Minnie questioned

slyly; Kate opened her lips to retort angrily, but Kirt interposed:

"Come, come. Show a little sense. Don't quarrel even if you are mad at the neighbors. If we are such a set, we will have to hold together. Now, I suppose I am lazy, but I never see work, someway. And I don't care about their calling me the 'Fiddling Parson.' I knew that before. The Downs' boys do that because I would not go to one of their dances. Now about the children. That is just Mrs. Grimes' talk, and if I was you, Kate, I would not say anything to the folks about what you have heard. It will make father feel bad, and as for mother, you know,—"

"Yes, yes, I know what you mean, Kirt. I won't say anything to them, 'though I was mad enough to tell them anything. Now what are we to do first?"

"I do not see as we can do anything," was Minnie's hopeless reply. "I can't see what we can do to better our condition, until I can get to teaching next fall and then I can buy clothes and comforts for all, but now—"

"O! we can't wait a hundred years for some unheard of, dreamed of time to come, Minnie Ford, and you know what she said about your getting a school. But I know that I can do something and I am going to begin to-day." And Kirt sang solemnly:

"Never put off till to-morrow,
What your hands find to do to-day."

Kate sprang up from her seat. "Yes, that's just it; that's just the way I feel. Now, Min-

nie, if you and Kirt will both help, we will go to house cleaning to-day."

"To-day! and where shall we begin?" Minnie asked in surprise.

Kate answered with an air of great superiority: "Why, first we will take up all the carpets and hang them on the clothes-line, then Kirt can get the brooms and whip them just as we saw the women doing the day we went to Lawrence Mills. You remember. Then Minnie and I will sweep up the dust and mop the floors, and then we will take everything out doors, all the furniture, and the dishes and the beds and the books and the stove and everything, and clean the whole house. Then we will take the windows down to the lake and wash them. If we work real hard we can get it all done to-day," she finished positively. Minnie listened in admiration.

"Why, how did you learn so much?" she asked.

"O! I do not go through the world with a book before my face," she answered loftily, "and besides that is the way Mrs. Ray does. I know, for I have seen her, and such a little house as this of course we can clean in a day. Let's begin."

"All right!" Minnie responded good-naturedly, "but you will have a dreadful time with mamma. She will not let us do a thing; for she is never willing anything shall be changed as long as it will hold together. That is, all but her bed, and that she turns around nearly every day; for papa says he never knows which side of the house his bed is."

Kate frowned, as she answered: "Leave her to me, Minnie, and I will be more than a match for her."

Kirt drew the bow across the strings, and sang, as he followed the girls to the house:

"Speak gently to thy mother,
She's growing old you know;
There is on earth no other,
Whoever loved you so."

"I will try to hold the peace," the girl softly replied, "but some one will have to beard the lion."

CHAPTER III.

A Hard Day's Work.

Kate was something of a diplomat as well as a manager, so she began operations by telling her mother that as long as she was not able to do hard work, she had decided to do the house-cleaning herself that day with the assistance of Kirt and Minnie, who agreed with everything she said.

But Mrs. Ford was not to be caught in that way. Clean house indeed! The idea! she guessed that her house was clean enough to do, and besides they were liable to move out any time, if Mr. Ford would only go into politics as he belonged, and she did not believe in tearing up everything and making a big fuss for nothing; but when Kate persisted that they were going to do the work, she began to scold vehemently, and wonder why she was plagued with three such unmanageable children as they. She raised such a hubbub that Mr. Ford, who was tinkering on an old wagon in the shed, heard the noise and came in to see what the matter was.

Kate at once appealed to him in very decided terms, and asked if they could not have the privilege of getting one room to look as well as

Mrs. Ray's house did. Mr. Ford agreed good-naturedly to her plans, and the delighted girl at once asked him to take the stove out the first thing, so that they could begin work right.

"Take the stove out!" he repeated in surprise. "That isn't the way, little girl. Sister Eliza never did so; and I do not believe Mrs. Ray does that way, either."

"Of course she doesn't, Kate doesn't know as much as she thinks for. And besides, we've got to bake bread to-day, and I would like to know how I am to do that out doors," Minnie interposed quickly.

"You will have to give up taking the stove out, Kate, but aside from that, go ahead. I'll risk you. Minnie, you look out for the books. I will bring a packing box from the shop and you put them in it and take care of them. But don't bother me any more about it;" and with this parting injunction Mr. Ford went hastily out to avoid the storm which he saw gathering.

The storm burst almost immediately, for Mrs. Ford could not find words enough in which to express her indignation at the turn affairs had taken; but Kate was not to be deterred from her plans, and went ahead as determinedly as if the sky had been serene. Minnie tried to pacify her mother but soon gave up the attempt and followed her sister's lead in tearing up carpets and carrying out furniture.

Soon the entire house looked as if it had been struck by a cyclone. The kitchen carpet, which originally had been a good rag one, together

with the three bedroom carpets, soiled and faded ingrains, were hung on the line and whipped vigorously. The furniture was piled promiscuously about the door and covered with heaps of bedding. The books, which completely filled a large packing box, were packed by themselves with the few dishes and pans they possessed. Before noon there was nothing left in the house but the stove and Mrs. Ford's favorite rocking chair, which she sat in so persistently that Kate could not get it to put with the rest of the furniture.

The family made a merry dinner of milk and bread, sitting in any convenient place out doors; and as soon as the meal was over the three began scrubbing and cleaning; Kirt bringing pail after pail of water from the lake, while the girls scrubbed the rough floors in a manner which would have astonished most house-keepers. However, their zeal and Kate's muscle atoned for their lack of skill, and they had the satisfaction of having thoroughly cleaned the floors.

Then Kirt and Minnie carried the windows to the lake, across the road from the house, to wash them. All went well until Minnie walked out on a slippery log which lay from the shore into the clearer water. The splashing water against her feet bewildered her, and missing her hold upon the window she slipped from the log and went down into the soft mud up to her waist. Kirt had gone to the house with the windows already washed and there was no one to help her.

She screamed desperately and struggled with

all her might, but of no use. The water was scarcely two feet deep, but she had slipped into the most treacherous part of the lake, and in spite of her efforts she felt herself slowly sinking deeper and deeper into the mud until it had nearly reached her shoulders; but before Kirt, who had heard her screams, could make out whether it was Carlo's howling or some one calling for help, Kate, who was scrubbing the log walls of her bedroom, heard the shrieks, and rushing down the rickety stairs, upsetting a pail of dirty water in her haste, she ran from the house to the lake, followed by Kirt, Bess, Irene and the dog. It took her but an instant to know what to do. Leaping upon the log, she steadied herself, and grasping Minnie by the shoulders held her up from the mud until Kirt and her father, who had also hastened to the scene, could rescue the girl from her perilous position; who, when at last upon the dry land, presented a most deplorable appearance with the mud dripping from her dress, and the dozen or more leeches which had fastened themselves upon her limbs still clinging to her body. Kate sank to the ground in paroxysms of laughter while Minnie danced frantically around until Kirt pulled them off. Then she ran to the house while Kate finished washing the windows and carried them back to the house to dry.

So intent had they been with their work that none of them had noticed the dark clouds which had been gathering since noon, until the sky suddenly darkened overhead and an ominous

roll of thunder told them that the storm was upon them.

All hands rushed to save the bedding and clothing from getting wet, but before the windows could be put in the wind raised and the rain came down in sheets; coming the strongest from the north, on which side there were three windows out, and driving in gusts across the floor, causing the helpless family to hide behind anything and everything which promised shelter.

The books outside were well protected, but the furniture and a good share of the bedding were thoroughly drenched by the storm, which increased rapidly in fury, subduing and aweing even Kate, who was disposed to make merry over their troubles in contrast to her mother's complaining, who, crouched on a feather bed in the most protected corner, alternately cried from fear or scolded her husband for letting the children do such a foolish caper.

Bessie clung to her father and cried, while Kate comforted the baby. Minnie tried to soothe her mother, while Kirt took his violin, and standing where he could see the flame-riven heavens, played as he never had played before.

The day had been very hot for that season of the year, and the storm was terrible in its fury. Through the open windows they could see the foam-lashed waters of the little lake, the forest trees waving and bending in the blast which swept over them, the murky clouds rent with the vivid flashes of forked lightning, and the

tremendous clashing of the elements which rendered conversation impossible. All of this had a charm for Kirt. He smiled as he drew the bow across the strings, and as the clouds rolled southward and the rain ceased falling he sang:

"Glory to the Father, and to the Son
And to the Holy Ghost
Amen."

Kate dashed away a tear as she said to Minnie, "See how good Kirt is. He is not afraid of anything, and I would not be either if I was good like him. He is always praising God, in sunshine or in storm; in trouble or in pleasure he still praises Him; while I do nothing but just fret and scold, and whenever there is any danger I am afraid. Now if Kirt should be struck by lightning he would go right to heaven singing, and when he got there the angels would not have to give him a new song."

Minnie smiled as she replied gently:

"If every one was as good as Kirt how happy the world would be;" but these words falling on her mother's ear were keenly resented and she exclaimed as she emerged from her corner:

"I think, Kate, you had better think about being good and minding your mother after this, and not turning everything topsy-turvy and out doors. Now we haven't got a dry chair or a bed in the house, and those carpets are ruined, and will never be fit to be put down again."

"I hope not," Kate exclaimed angrily. "If I can have my way I shall never have a carpet put down on the kitchen again. Never! No

good housekeepers do ; Mrs. Ray doesn't. It is just dreadfully ragged and greasy, and after this I shall mop the floor every day if necessary and keep it clean. Now, pa, if you will put the windows in I will mop up again for there are puddles in every room where the rain beat in. But what shall we do about the carpets and bedding? They will never get dry to-night, as it is four o'clock already."

"Why, do the best you can. The sun has come out now, and you have two more hours of sunshine. Get enough dry to sleep on anyway, and next time—"

"Next time do as I do," the mother interrupted ; "when I clean house I never stir up but one room at a time and clean that well, and then—"

"And then—" Kate broke in tartly, "you half clean that one and never touch the rest, so we live in the dirt all the time. Now when we came here," she went on recklessly, "we had better furniture and things than any one else in the neighborhood ; and now there isn't a decent thing on the premises or in the house. Every carpet we had is worn into rags, and now I am going to take what is left and put them away until I know enough to make rugs out of them, such as Mrs. Ray makes."

"Kate, child, stop !" Mr. Ford spoke sternly. "Do not talk that way to your mother. Go ahead and do the best you can and I will be with you, if you speak civilly to your mother. You've got your mother in hysterics already and you ought to know better."

Kate crimsoned. She felt her father's rebuke keenly, and during the rest of the day tried to hold her tongue, though aggravated and disheartened over the wet bedding and furniture which had completely spoiled her cherished plans of finishing all the house cleaning that day.

The windows were put back, and the beds brought in and spread with all the dry bedding they could command, but though they worked until late the house was very far from being in order when, worn out, they crept to bed to get their hard-earned rest.

Kate had learned one lesson; that while it is very easy to stir up a house it is another matter to put it in order quickly, and she sorrowfully reflected that after all perhaps she had not done just as Mrs. Ray would have done.

CHAPTER IV.

Kate's Trials.

Sunday dawned bright and clear; the little household woke later than usual for all were tired; even Kate's muscles were lame from her hard labors of the previous day, and Minnie declared herself too lame to walk around comfortably.

Kate surveyed her labors with considerable satisfaction, notwithstanding that they had been unable to get more than a few blankets dry the night before, while the rest of their bedding and carpets had all to be taken out doors and placed in the sun to dry. But there was no dust in the four rooms and the pantry shelves were spotlessly clean, as well as their few dishes placed in order upon them, so she congratulated herself again on her endeavors and resolved to get everything to rights the following day.

The simple breakfast was soon over with and Kate washed the dishes herself, leaving Minnie to arrange the books in order again. There was no thought of going to church. Mr. Ford had never been a church going man and his wife was bitterly opposed to any denomination but her own; the children, through Mrs. Ray's influence,

had gone to the Sunday School held in the school house as long as their decent clothes had lasted, but that had long since been given up and no amount of coaxing or advice had ever persuaded them to go there since.

Mrs. Ford had one boon companion, Mrs. Downs, a woman whom the children detested beyond measure; one who under a show of friendship for Mrs. Ford, succeeded in finding out all of their family affairs, and then published her news broadcast to the neighborhood. She was a devout Free Methodist and when about ten o'clock she came in to spend the day Kate was in despair.

"Never mind," said Minnie consolingly, "we can't help her coming, nor we can't prevent her talking, but I am glad that she can see that we have a clean house even if we are all topsyturvy. I'll keep the bed room door shut so that she can't see me arranging these books in the cupboard and lecture me on my wickedness."

"Yes, but she will lecture, you see, because the feather beds and blankets are out on the line and the carpets too. I'm going out there to hear what she says. I'd be glad to order her out of the house if I could. She'll preach and gossip, then she'll go away and lie about us, but the worst of it all is that she sets ma on so; but I won't give her a chance to find out pa's business to-day."

Mrs. Downs was comfortably seated in Mrs. Ford's rocking chair, and surveying the premises when Kate entered the room. Without noticing the girl she went on talking:

“I jest thought I’d come over and spend the day with you, Mis’ Ford, as long as it is Sunday and there is no meetings for us to go to here in this old God forsaken country; and I said to John, says I, ‘I’ll go over and chirk Mis’ Ford up a bit to-day.’ I don’t believe in going to worldly churches. I suppose the Baptists hold meetin’s yet in the school house, but I never go *there*. They don’t preach the Truth, and land knows! I can’t go where it is nothin’ but a dress parade. They jest go there to show their clothes, their ruffles and feathers, and fine dresses and golden ornaments which will some day be all cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone forever. They don’t even pretend to be perfect, them Baptists don’t, and I reckon it is jest as well for there aint a real good one among them. Now there’s Mis’ Ray, she’s allus frettin’ an’ scoldin’ about her neighbors, and mindin’ everybody’s business but her own; and *she’s* a Baptist, and as for Mr. Ray, whenever he comes into our house, he always spies around and goes home and tells Lucy, his wife, jest how every thing looks; and still you’d think from the looks of his face that he is a Saint or suthin’ else, even though he wears gold cuff buttons. But I allus enjoy comin’ over here and talkin’ over old times with you and the meetin’s we used to have when we lived out in the world. I used to go to every meetin’ and get religion every time I went. Now, I used to have some lovely times out East a ’goin’ to funerals, but there haint been a funeral in this town in a year except

among the Catholics. But I want to tell you Mis' Ford, I never could get along with my family if I wasn't a Christian. Now them boys air jest like their father, an' they will go to dances an' cut up all the time; but I have lived without sin so long that it is a part of my nature to bear up under all trials. But I often think of you, Mis' Ford, with that big girl a growin' up. That Kate! She's jest as bad as my Peter; jest as headstrong. Now I can't do a thing with him, but he is a boy, and boys allus come out right; but girls! Well it's no use I s'pose to talk about *that*. You've been cleanin' house, haven't you? I saw all the things out doors, an' I feel it my boundin' dooty, Mis' Ford, to remonstrate with you on your sinfulness in leavin' sech things out doors on the Sabbath, but I thought perhaps it was your children's doings and you could not help it." Here the worthy woman paused for want of breath, and Mrs. Ford took occasion to pour into her sympathetic listener's ear the tale of her sorrows of yesterday; not hesitating to lay all the blame on Kate, who was upheld by her husband in whatever she tried to do, she declared with a burst of tears.

"That is jest it," broke in Mrs. Downs, "you are run over by that understrapper all the time. She ought to go to the House of Correction. Mis' Grimes was in to see me yist'aday an' she told me how Kate sassed her at Mis' Ray's Friday, and Mis' Grimes an' I both say she ought to go to the House of Correction."

Kate sprang from her corner at the last re-

mark, the fire snapping from her black eyes. "And you had better go home and mind your own business," she cried, "and if I had the right I'd send you out too."

"Oh, child!" and Mrs. Ford began to cry, "you are such a trial to your mother. And to think that I had you baptized when you were six weeks old, and now when you are old enough to be 'taken in' that you should be going straight to Perdition."

"Perdition, or no Perdition," the girl angrily retorted, "I'd a hundred times rather go there than have to live in the same place with you, Mis' Downs, and I wish you would go home and never come here again. I mean what I say too."

Mrs. Downs, who was without sin, serenely took no notice of the girl's outburst, but said solemnly:

"I sometimes think how much better it would have been if *some* children," this with a significant glance at Kate, "had only died when they were little. Then they would surely have been saved if they had been baptized, but when they grow up headstrong and saucy there is no telling."

Mrs. Ford assented with a deep sigh, glancing at her daughter who sat glowering in a corner. "Now there's my children. Minnie is never saucy, but she cares nothing for religion and will never read one of my books; and Kirt, as I tell his father, who only laughs at me, that he will lose his soul on that old fiddle, for that is all he cares about. I don't see what makes him so for I

never cared anything for a fiddle myself. I think they are positively wicked, but he will let the boy have that to saw on; and he won't sing one of my hymns anyway. And Kate, she cares nothing for me or for the Methodists either. Now I know I am sanctified for I haven't worn a feather or a flounce in years; but Mrs. Downs aint you sorry you had so many children? now I am. I never wanted more than one, for that just makes a gentleman's family. I was an only child, and I always had everything I wanted, and since then I've had to slave for a big family. I think it is a dreadful thing to bring children into the world. We can care for their bodies but not for their souls; and it breaks my heart to think when I reach that happy home that I won't have any of my children with me, for there aint a Methodist but me among them; for there aint no way of gettin' to that better land unless you mortify the flesh and go without feathers and fine clothing and golden ornaments, as you have often said Mis' Downs, and I feel sure that if I was called to-night I should be ready; but Kate, she is surely doomed to Perdition, and my little children, how can I bring 'em up right, with her to influence them and Mr. Ford, who since he's turned bushwhacker and left politics alone, won't do anything I want him too, jest lets her do as she pleases, and there is no Free Methodist meetin's here as there was in Pennsylvania, and I don't have no Christian s'ciety here at all but you," and Mrs. Ford wiped her eyes on her apron while her visitor sniffed sympathetically.

Kate sprang up in disgust, and muttering something about people staying where they were not wanted, bounced out doors and went for Kirt, who was sitting with Bessie under the hemlock.

“Mis’ Downs and ma have been holdin’ a conference and taking me for a convert,” she exclaimed wickedly.

Kirt looked at her with a pained expression in his eyes, and raising his violin to his shoulder sang dreamily :

“And shall I be to judgment brought,
And answer in that day,
For every vain and idle thought
And every word I say.”

Kate turned away with tears in her eyes. Kirt had touched her heart again and had softened the callousness to religion made by her mother’s mistaken but well meant words. “Why should I be so bad,” she thought “and Kirt so good? I guess it is as ma says, that I was born bad; but I know I could be better if Mis’ Downs would never come here.”

Mrs. Downs having stayed until she was hungry and seeing no prospect for dinner, as neither Mrs. Ford nor the girls felt any inclination to let her see the scantiness of their larder, went away, having obtained a choice supply of fresh gossip for the coming week; she having found out through Mrs. Ford that Mr. Ford had not made any preparations for a garden and that he did not intend to, as he expected to leave any time. The latter expression was a standing joke in the

neighborhood, as he had been intending to leave immediately for five years, and the whole community knew that he had no means even to provide for his family.

Kate was so delighted at having Mrs. Downs leave that she was good natured during the dinner, and Mrs. Ford having relieved herself of her troubles to her bosom friend was less fretful than usual.

Dinner over, Kirt and Bessie went out on the lake in the old dug-out canoe, and with his violin whiled away the hours. Minnie took a book and went to her room. Mrs. Ford went to bed and Mr. Ford taking one of his cherished political works under his arm went out into the woods to read undisturbed. Kate and Irene alone seemed to have no occupation. The baby was terribly afraid of the water, and the older sister would go no place where she could not take her pet; so she wandered aimlessly around, gathering flowers and building tiny houses of sticks for the baby's amusement, or else drawing pictures in the sand with a stick, for the little one to imitate. At last she wandered to her father, who sat silently reading. She stood and looked at him for a few moments, her heart full of pity as she thought of his capabilities and how he had wasted his life, and she wondered bitterly if her mother would only encourage him if he would not yet do better.

He noticed her approach at last. "Sit down, Kate," he said gently, "I want to talk with you. You have made a good beginning at your house

cleaning, and I want you to go on with it and be housekeeper and see if we can't have a decent home. Ever since my sister Eliza died, my house has gone from worse to worse. Your mother was never taught to work at home, or to have any responsibility, as her poor health was always an excuse. It did not matter so much while Eliza was with us, as she was very capable and a manager like you. I would be glad to go into politics again but there is no use, for no one would vote for a man whose house looks like mine."

Kate saw her father in a new light. She realized that he let circumstances weigh him down instead of rising above them; that he was utterly discouraged, and instead of realizing where his share in their trouble lay, was disposed not to see his own mismanagement, or his own weakness in yielding to his wife's suggestions, which had always proved disastrous; but had given up weakly in order to keep the peace, acting in direct defiance to his better judgment many times. And so they had drifted from comfortable circumstances into poverty, and he had sunk helpless, waiting for something to "turn up" like Micawber, and laying all the blame on his wife's housekeeping, while she lay all the blame on him for not staying in politics where he belonged.

In her untrained mind the girl formed plans for bettering their condition and resolved to do all that she could do to help in housekeeping; while her father talked of his plans, saying that he had formulated a new tariff schedule, which

he was sure that he could perfect and which would give him wealth and fame, and in the meantime he would not bother about crops or much of a garden as it would be no use as he should leave there in a very few weeks.

The girl was never saucy to her father. She had abundant faith in him and his plans although they had never matured, but she did wish he would not be so visionary but more practical and do something to relieve their present necessities. Nevertheless she meant to do what she could to help, and if Minnie got to teaching perhaps all would yet be well.

CHAPTER V.

Mrs. Graves' Visit.

Monday morning and Minnie trudged away to the little school house two miles distant, while Kate endeavored to finish the house-cleaning. She was determined that the dirty, ragged carpets should not be put down again, and after a stormy scene with her mother, she carried her point at last, and her father carried them to the lake and fastening them securely allowed them to float in the water until they were effectually cleansed.

The most dilapidated pieces of furniture, which she knew from past experience would never be mended, she stowed with former wrecks in the shed, and arranged the rest to her liking; having the satisfaction when night came that everything was clean at last and in good order, and she contemplated an easy task in keeping it so; but before the week was over she learned, poor child, that while nearly any kind of housekeeper can put things to rights, it takes a good housekeeper to keep them so.

The week was one continual warfare between herself and the other members of the family. Every one had slovenly habits, throwing articles

down when used, and putting nothing away in its place. Kate kept a strict watch over herself and the rest, so much so that she instituted a marked improvement with everyone but her mother and the baby. Her father laughed at her stormings, but was careful to hang up his hat and coat, and put his books and papers back in the book-cupboard after using them. Minnie seconded her efforts when there although keenly resenting Kate's tone of authority and air of superior neatness. Kirt, who never liked disorder or sharp speeches, fled the house, followed by little Bessie, who tired of Kate's shrill voice calling: "Bess, pick up your bonnet and hang it on the nail, and don't you bring any more sand in this house never, etc.," fled in despair to Kirt under the hemlock and never ventured in except at meal time or night unless driven in by the weather, and then she crept about like a little mouse fearing to arouse the sleeping cat, and took shelter in either her father's arms or behind her brother's chair.

But not so with Irene; her fiery little spirit was fully equal to Kate's and stoutly she rebelled against her authority and discipline; but Kate was equal to the emergency and endeavored to enforce her rule by words, and when that failed, by slight punishments; but all this had little effect upon the rebellious two year old; then she tried spanking the little tyrant, and tying the mischievous hands behind her; but through all of these punishments it was harder to say which suffered the most, Kate or the baby; for Kate

loved the little one, next to Kirt, above everything earthly, but as she grimly expressed it to Minnie:

"I shall be to blame if Irene grows up such an ignoramus as her sisters have. Ma never thought it was a sin to fret and scold at us all the time, but whipping was a different thing, and there isn't one of us ever minded her in our lives, or anyone else since Aunt Eliza died. Now I am going to teach *myself* to mind, and make Irene mind; she has got to grow up knowing something if I have to whip her every day." But in spite of the punishments the wilful little fingers persisted in tearing down and littering, despite Kate's determined endeavors to keep the little cabin in "perfect order."

Tuesday she went to washing in spite of her mother's remonstrances. She declared that she was not going to have the washing stand around a whole week waiting for her mother to finish it, but that she was going to do it herself in the future. She calmly ignored all advice her mother gave, and went at it in her own headlong fashion. There was no boiler, so an old kettle was pressed into the service; and into this she recklessly dumped the clothes as fast as they were washed; white clothes, dresses, stockings, no matter what, all took their turn in the old kettle, and after a vigorous sudsing were hung in any fashion on the line; for the girl was absolutely ignorant of washing, believing that hot water, muscle and soap were all that were necessary; and although the Ford washing had never been

noted for its elegant appearance, yet the girl knew that it had never looked so bad before; and in the depths of her ignorant independent spirit, she wondered where the trouble lay. No laundress had ever worked harder she knew, for she had skinned nearly every knuckle with her vigorous rubbing, besides wetting herself to the skin; while the slop on the floor around the tub effectually wetted the feet of everyone who ventured near it. No one enjoyed that washing but Irene, who found unlimited mischief to do, her sister being too busy to pay much attention to her.

Mrs. Ray came over that afternoon and took in the situation at a glance, but much to Kate's relief she made no criticism of her work but told her to go ahead. She said that she should not wash until Friday as her boiler was away being repaired, and the girl resolved to watch her at her work and learn to do better.

The ironing was no better, and she sighed disconsolately at the wrinkles she had ironed into every garment, as she sat Saturday evening on the doorstep with Irene in her arms, thinking over the week. She was the only one who had done anything, with the exception of Minnie, who had studied hard in school. Her father and Kirt had dreamed away the hours as usual. The day before, with Irene in her arms, as she had strongly objected to being left behind, she had presented herself at Mrs. Ray's kitchen door, and had watched her wash, offering to help her occasionally, and Mrs. Ray, suspecting

the girl's reasons, had shown her how to wring, and had instructed her in the hundred and one little points which every good washer-woman knows, and the girl had gone away determined to profit by what she had learned.

She thought of her many failures and her brave heart sank at the prospect of ever making her home look like Mrs. Ray's tidy house. She had made fruitless attempts at mending and darning also during the week, but the rents she had mended really looked worse than if she had let them alone. "If I had only some one to teach me to work," she thought regretfully, "but never mind, I have done my best and every thing is clean, even if the whole family have been made mad at me; and I have nearly broken my back and skinned my knuckles too; and have had to whip Irene sixty times or more for her naughty ways."

She stroked the little head resting in her lap, and played with the tiny baby fingers. The child smiled up in her face, her bright eyes gleaming with love and beauty. Kate clasped her tighter in her arms and kissed her again and again, while her heart swelled with love and pain, while some strange dread of coming evil tugged at her heart strings, and she covered her eyes with the baby's wee hands trying to hide the tears which pressed against her eye-lids.

"Life would not be worth much to me without you, Queen Irene," she said softly, "your big untrained sister loves you too well to see you grow up as big a fool as she is, and she is going to make you mind, Miss Baby, if it takes all summer."

The child cooed and stroked her sister's cheek and then throwing her arms about her neck hugged and kissed her with all her baby love. Kate had been so intently wrapped up in her own thoughts and with the baby that she had not noticed the carriage which had stopped in front of the house nor the approach of a gentleman and lady, until an ominous growl from Carlo as he trotted around the house caused her to look up quickly, and putting the child down she rose to greet the strangers.

"Does Mr. Ford live here?" the lady asked pleasantly.

Kate answered in the affirmative as she led the way into the house and seated her guests on the lounge. She feared, she knew not what, and she wished her father was there. Minnie sat at the table solving problems; Kirt in the farther corner was fashioning a small trap with Bessie by his side. Mrs. Ford sat in her rocking chair by the stove, and Kate paused at the door.

There was a pause for a moment; an eternity it seemed to Kate, who remembered what she had heard Mrs. Grimes say. Then the lady spoke:

"Is your father at home? We wish to see him."

"He is somewhere around, he will be here soon," Kate replied, her voice choking, but she kept her eyes on the lady's face while she tightened her grasp on Irene.

"And this is Mrs. Ford," the lady continued pleasantly. "I am Mrs. Graves, of the Leslie Home, and this is my husband. I understand," she went on rapidly, "that you have very poor

health. It must be very hard for you to care for these small children, and then you seem to have a large family too."

"Yes," responded Mrs. Ford, and her voice sounded very weak and pious, the tone which always nettled her children. "I have a large family and a hard one too for a sick woman to manage, but I am sure the Lord helps me to bear my burdens."

"As I said," resumed Mrs. Graves, "I represent the Leslie Home for children, and as we were informed of your physical condition we came to see you, as we thought it would be a good thing for you and them to take them with us to the Home. I have some pictures of the place here with me. See what a beautiful place it is," and taking some pictures from her husband, she handed them to Mrs. Ford who took them mechanically. "This is the Home building proper, and this is the chapel—"

"And is it Free Methodist?" Mrs. Ford interrupted eagerly.

"Not Free, but an M. E. Institution," the lady answered.

"But that is better than if it was Baptist or something else, though not as good as the Free," assented Mrs. Ford. "My little children have never been baptized, and it haunts me day and night to think of their little souls going to perdition."

"We would have them baptized if you wish it; and they would grow up surrounded by all that is good and beautiful," assented the lady.

"I would be glad to have the children go anywhere where they would grow up good Methodists. I wish I was a child so I could go too," the mother answered.

Mrs. Graves was highly pleased with her success, and began speaking with her husband about removing the children, but she never finished her sentence, for Kate exclaimed excitedly:

"For Heaven's sake, ma, what are you saying? What do you mean? Don't you know that they want to take our children away from us where we will never see them again, because they think we can't take care of them!"

The girl was trembling with agitation. Her masses of red-brown hair tossed back from her face which had turned to marble whiteness; her lips were drawn and white and her eyes of unnatural brightness as she faced the lady, still clasping the baby to her breast, who clung to her neck and watched the strangers with terror written on her little face; but when her glance rested on her sister's face her eyes filled with tears and sob after sob shook the tiny frame.

This was too much for Kate, and turning upon Mrs. Graves she asked in a voice that thrilled and vibrated with pain: "Mrs. Graves, are you a mother?"

"Yes: I have three," she answered in surprise.

"Then tell me how you would feel for me to come to your house and in the name of the law snatch them away from you and carry them away?"

"But you are not the children's mother!"

"No: but I might as well be," the girl sadly replied, "for I have given her nearly all the care she ever had. I have stayed out of school and cared for her by night and by day, and Kirt has done the same by Bessie."

But Kirt was gone. At the first mention of the Home, he had sprung out of the window, and with Bessie in his arms had disappeared. The girl noticed his absence with relief. Minnie was crying bitterly, but without a pause Kate went on:

"Ma has no right to tell you that you can have the children. She doesn't know anything but to be a good Methodist, and I am the house-keeper here. You would have no right to the children unless pa said so; and I wish he would come."

Mrs. Graves had noticed the spotless floor, clean lounge-cover, blackened stove, and the few dishes shining in purity, piled orderly on the table. The children were neatly clothed though very poorly and the same could be said of all. Everywhere was manifested poverty but everything was neat.

Mr. Ford entered the house at that moment, and Mrs. Graves tried to explain her errand to him, and to win his consent as well as his wife's, but she quite failed in her undertaking. The bronze face of the man grew lividly white, and as he reached for a chair his step faltered. He realized keenly what it would be for all with the little ones gone. He had met Kirt, running from the house with Bessie in his arms, but the boy

had told him nothing; and in the brief moment following Mrs. Graves' explanation of her errand, he lived a lifetime of misery such as he had never experienced before. Mrs. Graves saw the effect her words had produced and her mother heart was stirred with pity, as he bowed his head on his hands in agony. All was still for a moment and Minnie hushed her sobbings as she saw her father's agony. At last he spoke in a low constrained voice:

"Mrs. Graves, who sent you here?"

"I came in behalf of the Home which looks after and cares for destitute children."

"But who complained to you regarding my children?"

The lady hesitated and then answered gently: "The letter was written by one of your neighbors, who requested that her name should not be mentioned."

"And is that the way you do business?" his eyes blazing. "Why will you take the word of one who is ashamed to have her or his name mentioned, before the overwhelming love of a father, and deprive him of his family, his dearest source of happiness? I am poor, but who ever dared to say I have abused my family—that I have ever wasted my means—or have failed to do my duty by them as far as my income allowed me? Luck has been against me ever since I came here, but I am preparing to leave very soon."

"That is just it," broke in his wife, raising her voice at every word; "if you had stayed in

politics as you ought to, and back in Pennyslvany as you belonged, and had never dragged your wife and family out here in the woods as bushwhackers, Andrew Ford, we wouldn't 'a come to this. It is God's judgment upon you and you will never prosper until you take your folks back to Pennsylvany, where they can go to meetin' and get religion, as Mis' Downs says."

Mr. Ford, paying no attention to the excited woman's harangue continued speaking to the lady:

"The children have never suffered for the necessities of life. We have a cow, and we always have enough such as it is. I have done the best I could, but as I say, luck is against me."

"And it serves you right!" almost shrieked his wife, as she relapsed into a wild fit of weeping and scolding, which Mr. Ford tried in vain to check.

Mrs. Graves looked helplessly on. She saw it all. A smart man crippled by an unaccountable wife; a woman of no mind or judgment, but who had power to sway her husband in many ways. She knew that the children would be better off away from *her*, but to take them from the father and Kate would be an act which only an extreme case could warrant.

She looked from one to the other. Kate, stern and defiant, with the bright ungovernable child in her arms; the weeping hysterical wife,—the discouraged husband trying to soothe her with gentle words, and Minnie, sitting the picture of despair at the table. The girl attracted her,

and looking at her quiet tear-stained face, she saw what few had ever noticed; an energetic studious girl capable of grasping and doing great things if the occasion offered; a girl of great perseverance and earnestness of purpose, one with whom she could talk reasonably.

Leaving the room she beckoned the girls to follow her to the carriage. They went silently and neither spoke for several moments, then she addressed Minnie:

“Miss Ford, what do you intend to do? what is your aim in life?”

The girl looked up in surprise. “I intend to be a teacher. I shall take the examination in August, and after that I shall teach. If I can once get a school I shall be all right, and can then help to provide. Kate takes care of the house now and she is like a mother to us all.”

The lady smiled down into the grief-stricken face of the young housekeeper, and gently stroked the baby's soft silken hair. “Be a good little mother, Kate, and I promise you that we will not take the children away to-night. I am sorry that we came, but we were informed that you were in very needy circumstances, so much so that the children lacked both food and clothing, also that your home was not a suitable place in which to bring up the children. We were authorized to come and see them and take them if we deemed advisable to do so; but I have decided to leave them without further action until the first of November, when we will come again, and if you

are not in better circumstances than you were last winter we shall have to take them then."

Minnie answered bravely: "I know that we are very poor, Mrs. Graves, and that we have but very little to wear, and not much to eat, but we have never starved yet, and the children are never sick. Give us one more trial. I am sure that I can pass the examination, for I have studied so hard, and teachers are always wanted, and then I can help so much; and I know papa will do something besides read, now he is wakened up, and Kate and Kirt will help; and oh! Mrs. Graves, it would kill papa I know if you should take the children."

"You poor girls," and Mrs. Graves kissed each one tenderly. "I am very sorry for you. Your case was misrepresented to us in some ways. I see that your mother is scarcely better than a child, but do the best you can, and I believe you will come out all right." Her husband came out to the carriage saying that the woman was in hysterics, and bidding the girls good-night they drove away in the fast gathering darkness.

Thankful that their darlings were safe for a time at least, they returned to the house. Mr. Ford succeeded in coaxing his wife into good humor again, and induced her to go to bed, for she was vehement in her denunciations of Mrs. Graves, whom she declared had come there through the instrumentality of Mrs. Ray; but the others thought differently, believing that either Mrs. Grimes or Mrs. Downs had written the letter.

The three sat silently by the stove thinking

deeply until about nine, when Kirt silently entered with the sleeping Bessie wrapped in his coat. He carried her up to her bed, and then sat down with the rest, while Kate told him the story. He made no comment, but when she ceased speaking, he turned to his father and said:

“Father, you can peel at least two loads of tan-bark this season. It is in prime condition, for I have been through there to see. It is ready now, and Kate and I will get in the crops. We must all do something besides thinking this summer.”

Everyone looked at him in surprise, but there was a new light in his eyes, and something in his determined voice which proved to be just the tonic his father needed; for throwing aside his lethargy, he answered with more vigor than he was ever known to express before unless engaged in an argument:

“All right, my boy. We will all do our best this summer, and when fall dawns we will leave, and leave for good.”

CHAPTER VI.

Earnest Endeavors.

Sunday was dark and dismal, and the family had ample time to think over Mrs. Graves' visit, and make their plans for a season of work; for the terrible thought of having to part with the children incited each one to do all the work possible, in order to help prevent such an occurrence taking place. Kate talked it all over with her father, and told him what she had heard Mrs. Grimes say in regard to their children, and of the condition of their home. It was a hard blow for him, but he bore it bravely, and cast off his sluggishness and dreaming, resolved to show the world that he could work.

They decided that the letter had been written by either Mrs. Grimes or Mrs. Downs; and Mrs. Ford, realizing the full import of the previous day's visit, became as bitter against the two women as she had formerly been against Mrs. Ray; and when at night, the two came over with smooth speeches and smiling looks to find the result of their letter, they met with such a cool reception from each member of the family, including Carlo, who took his place by the stove and growled continuously during their visit, that

they went away without having learned a thing, beyond the fact of their having been there; a fact which Kate communicated with the remark: "That if they wished to know more about it, they could write another letter to follow their first one, and that their room would be much more welcome than their company." A remark which Mrs. Ford did not correct the girl for making.

Monday, and they all went to work. Mr. Ford to the bark-woods which was just ready for peeling, many of the farmers beginning work in the woods the same week. In the early spring Mr. Ford had ploughed the garden, a small plot, which in all the years he had been there he had never made profitable, as he had never intended to stay from one season to another. On account of the heavy frosts late in May or the first of June, many did not put in their gardens until late, in order to escape having their vines killed; so the Fords were but a little later than their neighbors in getting in their garden; for with the exception of a very few rows of potatoes, nothing had as yet been planted.

During the following weeks they worked unceasingly. Mr. Ford, in the woods, felling the great hemlocks which came crashing through the other trees to the ground under the steady blows of the axe, and after the chip, chipping of the spud, lay stripped of their dark covering, whitening sepulchres of their past grandeur. Steadily he worked in the woods, until he had peeled two carloads and piled it in the clearing

to be drawn to the Siding, where hundreds of cords were being piled by the farmers awaiting shipment.

Minnie was at school until the last of June and the whole garden work fell upon Kate and Kirt. They fertilized the ground as richly as they could, and used every available inch of their garden plot in planting their potatoes, corn and vegetables. So diligently did they work and so rapidly did everything grow under the hot sun, that there was not a garden in the settlement that could compare with theirs; and they planned on having corn enough for their chickens and potatoes enough for their winter use. The season was very dry, but their garden did not suffer as the two watered it every day with water from the lake. Not a weed was to be seen, as Kirt devoted his energies to its prosperity as faithfully as he ever had to his violin, leaving Kate time to attend to the housework, and she worked with such energy that she did not allow any dirt or dust to accumulate in one of the four rooms.

Every week she found time to appear in Mrs. Ray's kitchen with Irene in her arms, and take observation lessons in housekeeping; the good woman never failing to give the girl many little hints and helps, and told her that when she wished to learn to cook she would teach her how; but that was beyond Kate at present. Their chickens kept them supplied with flour and meal and the very few groceries they were obliged to have; their living consisted almost

entirely of eggs, milk and Johnny-cake, and Minnie did all of their baking out of school-hours. Pie, cake and cookies, were almost unheard of in the Ford household.

The neighbors had not failed to notice and comment on the unheard of activity in the Ford family, and while rightly divining the cause, predicted that it would be of mushroom growth; many of these unpleasant remarks reached Kate's ears, but she refrained from repeating them to anyone but Irene, who sympathized in baby fashion.

The last of June Kirt drew the tan-bark to the siding with powerful Dolly, their one horse, and the old lumber wagon, which an endless amount of tinkering had made strong enough for their purpose. A rickety express wagon was their only other vehicle. Mr. Ford then turned his attention to the meadow, and with a scythe cut the hay while Kate followed with the rake. By the fourth the tan-bark was all drawn, the hay cut and stacked, as the little shanty barn had no room for it; and the garden with its corn and potatoes, and luxuriant vines, was a constant source of pride and joy.

Lawrence Mills, the village some miles distant, was to have a big celebration, and the whole surrounding country-side turned out to help celebrate. The Ford children were as anxious to go as any of their neighbors, and had talked of nothing else for days; for there was to be patriotic music, speeches, readings, etc., at the hall; sack racing, horribles, a parade, horse-racing and

foot-races, catching a greased pig, dancing, a balloon ascension, and best of all, fire-works in the evening. What young people of fifteen and sixteen would withstand such attractions? Certainly not the Fords, and early in the morning Dolly was brought to the door harnessed to the express wagon, and the five children drove merrily away, having thirty cents to spend; an amount for which the three oldest ones had denied themselves eggs in order to save from the family expenditures.

They were bent on having a good time and were resolved not to care if they were shabbily dressed, and the little ones were barefoot; they were all clean, and their garments were whole, for the girls had taken two whole days to wash, iron and repair their clothes for the great event. Kirt's pants were too short, his feet were bare, his hat ragged and he was coatless; but what did he care? he was going to have a chance to hear music for all one day, and that was enough for him. The girls had faded, outgrown calico dresses which had been their best for two summers. Shoes which they never dared to wear at home, and hats of two-year-old style; the babies in their little slips and gingham sunbonnets were as happy as if dressed in the finest lawn, for they were going to ride and that was everything to them.

They drove joyously away. Kirt and Kate on the front seat; Minnie and the little children in the back. Dolly, who in spite of her unusual hard work of the previous weeks had not failed very

much in flesh, was in as good spirits as the children and trotted briskly ahead. All of the country side were astir, and early as they were yet a number of teams had gone ahead of them, and many more followed them over the dusty roads to the town.

On their way they talked of their future prospects. "It is such a comfort to think that this is the very last of our being so poor," remarked Minnie, "for papa will surely get sixty dollars for his bark, and that will help us wonderfully; for the garden is coming on so nicely that we won't have to use the money for food and we can buy clothes and things with it."

"Yes," assented Kate, "it's a good thing for us that Mrs. Graves came as she did, for we could never have stirred pa if something hadn't come up about the children; and when he gets the sixty dollars it will be more money than he has ever earned since Bessie was born; for he lost that office he was running for that spring and he was so discouraged he has never tried to do anything else since, but just 'bushwhack' as ma says, and she is enough to try the patience of anybody. But I feel rich with the five dollars pa promised us when he got his money. I know what I shall do with mine. What will you do, Kirt?"

"Get some clothes for winter, and shoes for Bessie, and some violin strings if I have enough left," he answered, "what will you do?"

"Get something decent to wear, a pair of shoes anyway, and stockings, and Irene must have

shoes this winter. Those little moccasins the children had last winter won't do for this, and I guess I'll buy a washtub, and have a new bottom put in the old boiler. Mrs. Ray said it could be done, and then my washing will look like hers. O! I could use a hundred dollars easy; but no matter; we can get along someway."

"I've thought what I shall do with mine," said Minnie. "I am going to get the pretty gingham I saw in the store a month ago; it will only cost a dollar and a half; a straw hat for fifty cents; a handkerchief and a pair of gloves and some shoes and rubbers, and some aprons for mamma, and that will leave me about a dollar to spend at the examination for paper and such things, and when I get to teaching, for I know I shall pass, we will be all right, for I can help us all out of being so poor."

"Oh yes, we shall be all right, and we can stand being poor a little while longer," said Kate cheerily, "for sixty dollars will make us rich. There's going to be acres of berries. The huckle-berries are ripe already, and the raspberries and blackberries are coming on good too, and you and I can pick quarts of them and sell them as we did last year, Minnie; and you know I am going to pick enough berries for Mrs. Ray to pay her for making our dresses. Oh, yes, we shall never be so poor again, for we are getting so big, we three, you will be seventeen, in October, and Kirt and I sixteen in December, and of course we can do something to help. I only wish we had done it before, but you know,

Minnie, we were never taught to work, and I didn't care about anything but helping pa out doors, and you, nothing but books, so of course we are poor. But we'll have a good time to-day anyway. See how many people are in town already. We can spare ten cents, can't we, and put Dolly in the stable?"

"Yes, that must be her Fourth; then we'll get some fire-crackers for Bess and Irene, and cookies for us," replied Kirt; "you girls stay here on the sidewalk, and I'll come for you when I get the horse put up."

The girls so seldom went to town that they were awkward and shy among so many people, and stood silently by themselves waiting for Kirt to appear; then they wandered away to the various attractions expecting a whole day of unalloyed enjoyment. Kirt went with them to the hall to hear the music, and when the speeches and readings were over with, he took Bessie to the Bowery Hall, which was already filled with merry dancers, and finding a secluded seat enjoyed the music to his heart's content.

Kate was anxious to see the races, and persuaded Minnie to go with her to them. Thus the time wore on until noon, and after eating their lunch in the wagon they wandered back to the main street where the running race was to be held, followed by the balloon ascension.

CHAPTER VII.

Through The Arch of Fire.

The running race which was the leading feature of the day's attraction, brought the crowds to the sidewalks from the saloons and the bowery dances as well as from the lemonade stands and lunch counters. The streets were cleared of teams and bicycles, and after considerable scoring the horses were started and all watched in breathless suspense the dense clouds of dust which completely hid the flying horses from view, as they raced down the given half-mile stretch; but while Kate had been all eagerness regarding the race, Kirt had given his sole attention to the music of Ben Hur's Chariot Race sounding from the band wagon.

The day was intensely hot with a strong west wind blowing a gale, but these little discomforts were totally overlooked by the crowd who were congratulating themselves on not having rain to spoil their day's amusement. The third and final heat of the race was called, and the horses were off amid the intense excitement of the throng; but the race was never to be watched to a finish, for hardly had a quarter been completed when the ringing cry of "Fire! fire! the woods

are on fire!" rang through the air and was instantly taken up by a hundred voices, as the panic-stricken crowds noticed for the first time the dense clouds of smoke lifted by the wind revealing sheets of flame leaping among the dry grass and timber just east of the town.

Forgotten were the races and other amusements, and the crowds rushed toward the scene of conflagration, where the fire had suddenly sprung up kindled by a stray fire-cracker, and fanned into terrible fury by the wind, was already beyond their control.

How Kirt and his sisters kept together they never knew, but they were among the first to reach the outskirts of the village where the fire was rapidly licking up the dead wild grasses of the pine chopping, and leaping up the bare dead trees, wreathing them in flames from trunk to top, and menacing the board houses on the town limits and threatening with destruction the lumber piles not far distant.

Wildly clanged the firebells, and the steam saw-mill gongs shrieked and bellowed and groaned, waking the echoes for miles around and calling out every man, and every means the town afforded to help extinguish the flames. The little fire-engine came clanging to the rescue but the stream was dry, and the neighboring wells so low that it could be of little use. The celebration had instantly turned into a fire brigade; every man and boy who could throw up fresh earth or whip the flames with brush, did all in his power to stay the spread of the

fire; but fanned by the fierce west wind it swept on, but fortunately away from the town, leaving a blackened smoking plain, dotted here and there by blazing trees which came crashing down, sending showers of sparks high in the air, while the hungry wind caught up the flying cinders and carried them on to the green forest beyond, and soon the whole country east of the town seemed wrapped in sheets of flame; the sky reflecting back the red tongues of fire, and the sun shining through, like a fiery ball swinging in a cloud of smoke.

With a frightened crowd of women and children the Fords had stood silently watching the scene, too awe-struck and terrified to think, till Minnie exclaimed:

“O, Kate! it is going toward home!”

“No, not unless it gets into the north a little more for we live northeast of here,” Kate answered turning towards Kirt, who put Bessie down from his arms and said:

“I think we had better start for home or we may not get there. The wind may change, and we had better go while we can. You stay right here and I will come with Doll. We can get home in an hour and the folks will be frightened about us.” He was back in a few moments, and sprang on the back seat with Minnie, leaving Kate free to drive, who realizing what every moment meant, gave Doll free rein, and drove rapidly out of town.

For the first two miles, aside from the dense smoke they were in no danger, as their road led

away from the fire; then it turned and Kirt spoke for the first time since they started.

"I am afraid," he said hoarsely, "that the wind is changing. I thought when we started that the fire would not cross our road. But just as we left town I saw the vane on the livery barn was nearly northeast, and I am afraid we cannot make the river before the fire does."

Kate struck the horse vigorously, starting her into a brisk gallop. "If we can only get through the Black Woods before the fire reaches there we shall be all right. These two miles south we have covered quickly, and it is only two miles more to the corner where the river crosses the road," Kate answered hopefully.

"But you must remember," said Minnie, as she held firmly to her hat, "that the fire isn't standing still waiting for us to come to the corner; and oh, Kate, can't you make Doll go just a little bit faster?"

Kate had been prudent enough to let the horse save her strength during the first two miles, but when they entered the two miles ride toward the east, right in the path of the flames which were already crackling and roaring in the pine forest, she realized that now they must ride for life, and she urged the horse on continually.

"The wind has changed, Kirt;" she turned a white face toward her brother. "For the love of God, you and Minnie hold fast to the children. The wind is blowing a gale; and there does not seem to be air enough to breathe. See how the tree-tops weave and how dark the sky is! The

fire will catch us before we get through; and we must ride into it. Doll! go for your life!"

Minnie and Kirt sank into the bottom of the wagon, and held the crying children, while Kate bracing herself on the front seat with her feet against the dashboard, drove for her very life. Already the fire had caught on both sides of the road, and as far as they could see ahead of them and to the right appeared a line of blazing trees and sheets of flame in the undergrowth.

For a mile the old express wagon bounded over the rough woods road, now striking a projecting root on one side or grazing a stump on the other; bouncing over the uneven corduroy, nearly sending the terrified children out from their seats. The little ones screamed with terror, and clung to Kirt and Minnie, who held desperately to the sides of the wagon.

The air was dense with smoke and the flying cinders ignited the dense undergrowth, and fell on all sides of the wagon which could not long endure the strain; and as they dashed over a little hill the front wheel plunged into a rut, followed by a terrific crash, a whirl of flying spokes, and the wagon lurched forward, coming down upon the axle, throwing Kate violently forward over the dashboard, while the others were thrown in a heap out on the ground.

Kate did not lose her presence of mind, and springing instantly to her feet brought the horse to a stop, while the rest scrambled to their feet. For an instant no one spoke, then Minnie sobbed out that they would all be burned alive, for

ahead and behind they could see nothing but fire, except for a short distance to the right where the undergrowth was not yet ablaze; although the fire roared and crackled in the tree-tops above them as if the very demons of hell were roaring over their heads.

That was an awful moment, one that they never forgot, as they stood there in the burning forest, by the side of their ruined wagon; the frightened horse looking at them as if questioning their next move, the little ones shrieking with fear, clinging to them for the protection it seemed they could not give; retreat cut off, fire on every side except a short distance to the right, and death seeming certain for them all.

It was but a few seconds, yet it seemed an eternity. At that moment a herd of frightened deer burst from the undergrowth, and ran headlong toward the right. Kate grasped the situation.

"The river! the river!" she exclaimed. "It is there. You and Minnie go there, you can swim. I can't. I will take the children and ride for life. The fire is only in the tops yet, ahead of us! Quick! unharness Doll, and I will go!"

A moment and the horse was taken from the broken wagon. Kate strapped one rein firmly around the horse's body, throwing off all the harness excepting the bridle, and sprang on her back, using the check rein to guide her with. "Hand me Bessie! strap her tight to me so she cannot fall!"

Kirt had been winding the other rein around Bessie's waist. He kissed her as he lifted her to Doll's back and fastened the rein around Kate's waist, thus binding the two together. The tears rolled down his cheeks. "God will take care of you Bessie, and remember and hold fast to Kate," he said brokenly.

Minnie handed Irene, and Kate clasped her in her arms and looked back for an instant to say good-bye. In the moment in which they had been getting ready the fire had made rapid progress; and as Minnie turned to flee for the river she called:

"Kate, darling, do not fall, for if you do all will be lost."

"I cannot and will not fall," she shouted in reply, and something in her determined voice reassured the others, and they parted each with an unsaid prayer trembling on the lips. Life or death lay before them. Neither knew which it would be; for two of them the dark waters of the swift river offered the only safety; for the other three, a wild ride through blinding smoke and flame.

Doll sprang forward, exerting every muscle in her powerful frame; half blinded by the glare of the fire, she bowed her head to the ground and dashed on under the fire-wreathed tossing trees; but as faster and faster she ran bearing her precious burden to safety, wilder and fiercer came the flames, sweeping over hill and dale, leaping from tree to tree, roaring through the grasses and turning the undergrowth into a living lake

of fire, scorching the horse's flanks and singeing Kate's hair which tossed wildly behind her upon the wind.

She never looked to the right or left, but sat the horse as firmly as if the animal was a part of herself: clasping Irene to her breast, holding the little face away from the fire as much as she could while the child sobbing with terror cowered in her arms, she held the rein between her teeth so as to hold the child more firmly. Poor frightened Bessie ceased crying, but hiding her face on her sister's shoulder she clasped her arms about her waist and shut her eyes so as not to see the dreadful sight about her.

Now but half a mile lay between them and the open clearing where there was a considerable stretch of ploughed land. Would they be able to reach it? Kate uttered a stifled prayer for deliverance, and urged Doll on to greater speed if possible, but the noble horse was doing her best and running at greater speed than she had ever run before. The fire had caught in many places on the other side of the highway and added to the frightful roar and terrible heat. Just beyond stretched a belt of hemlock; the flying sparks had ignited the tops of the trees, and the sandy road ahead of her lay under a glittering arch of fire. Involuntarily she glanced behind; the wild thought of retreat flashed across her mind, but that was impossible, for already the fire had crossed her track and seemed about to engulf her. "O God!" she cried, "this is terrible, but spare me for the children's sake!"

For a moment Doll seemed to be blinded and acted as though she was going mad. Once she turned partly around and reared, trying to wheel about and rush again into the holocaust from which she had just emerged; but Kate succeeded after a brief struggle in bringing her under control and urged her forward. The horse was trembling with fear and great beads of sweat rolled down her quivering flanks. With flakes of white foam flying from her lips and her head bowed down between her knees, she dashed under the blazing trees, the thunder of her hoofs drowned by the crackling of the blazing and breaking branches above. The very air seemed to rain down the fiery particles upon them, but luckily for them the green needle-like leaves of the hemlock had no power to retain the heat, and all fell harmlessly; but the heat was fearful; the air was nearly burned out in the fiery hell through which they were passing—the worst stretch of their terrible ride.

Kate lay as low as possible, shielding Irene's face and keeping it turned toward the ground, for the undergrowth of the hemlocks had not yet caught fire; if it had they never could have passed through. The fierce wind surged through the treetops carrying the flying sparks onward. Here and there a blazing tree had fallen across the road, but the maddened horse leaped over them and rushed blindly on.

Just ahead the old bridge spanned the river. She uttered a joyous cry at the sight, but her joy was turned to dismay; for at that in-

stant she saw that a blazing tree had fallen across it and the dry planks of the bridge were already on fire.

She tried to rein Doll down the banks and so plunge into the river; but the horse, crazed and bewildered, paid no attention to the rein, and seizing the bit between her teeth rushed wildly on the blazing bridge, plunging fearlessly into the very flames, and with a terrific bound gained the clear, unscorched planks beyond, and the next instant was beyond the flames and into the clearing where the fire could not come.

Kate shut her eyes as the horse leaped on the bridge, and in that brief instant she expected nothing but certain death, fearing the bridge would crash beneath them. A whiff of cooler air fanned her cheeks; the horse's hoofs no longer thundered over the shaking bridge, and she opened her eyes to see that they were safe; had turned towards the north, and had left the fire roaring towards the east.

Realizing the danger was past, Doll went slower and slower, then came down upon a walk and stopped panting for breath, with hardly strength to stand.

Kate leaned over her neck and put Irene on the ground; then she unbuckled the rein, freeing herself from Bessie and sprang off, taking the child in her arms. She led Doll under a tree and rubbed her down, while the children, exhausted from their terrible ride, fell asleep in the shade.

CHAPTER VIII.

An Irish Friend.

Doll was nearly spent with the heat and stood with drooping head and heaving sides, the perspiration streaming from every pore, while Kate rubbed her vigorously, utilizing Irene's much soiled apron in want of a better article. She noticed for the first time that her legs and hips had been scorched, and her mane and tail badly singed by her fearful race through the flames; and forgetting entirely her own weariness she thought only of some way to care for the horse and relieve her sufferings. "If I only had a blanket and some ointment for you, Doll," she said aloud; and as if in answer to her wish she heard the cheery voice of old Mike O'Reilly calling:

"An' in faith, gyurl what is the matter with the ould mear an' is it out of the fire you've come?"

Kate turned joyfully, and greeted the honest hearted old man and his wife warmly, who were hurrying down the road. "I thought you had probably gone to celebrate, and I was just wishing I had a blanket and some ointment for my poor Doll here, for she is burned, and I am afraid she will founder."

“Founder is it! an’ it’s burnt that she is too!” and the old man took the bridle from Kate’s hand and looked at the horse closely. “She aint burnt deep at all, at all; but you niver mean to tell me, gyurl, that you an’ the mear, an’ the two childers have come through the fire yonder.”

“But we have,” answered Kate. “We thought we could get through, and we left town just after the fire started, and we were all right until we turned east, and then the wind had changed and the fire was coming toward us; but we got on all right until the wagon broke, a mile back, where the river comes near the road, and I took the children and ran through the fire, and Kirt and Minnie went to the river.”

“For the love of God!” both her listeners ejaculated, “an’ ef you aint the pluckiest gyurl to ride through the fire that way. Shouldn’t thought the old mear could ha’ done it. But you’re lucky to be alive, but it was a fool of a trick a’tryin’ it. Didn’t you hev sense enough to wait until the fire had burned over the road? but that’s jest like childer. You lead the mear up to the barn, an’ I’ll take care of her a spell, an’ you bring one of the childer an’ my old woman will take the other, an’ I’ll do what I can to bring the mear around.”

Thus talking and scolding the old man led the horse to the barn, and took care of her while the children were laid on the good woman’s clean bed to rest.

Mrs. O’Reilly trotted back and forth from the house to the barn, with ointments and blankets,

while Kate helped the old man in his care of the horse. He shaded his eyes with his hand as if to shut out the glare of the flames, while Kate told again her ride through the fire. Then he said:

"I tould the ould woman to-day that there was nothin' there that we could care to see, an' my ould horse is too afraid of fire crackers to be taken out on such a day at all at all; an' thin I was afraid o' fire, for the woods are as dry as a tinder; but we're safe enough here in the clearin' unless the wind changes, which it aint likely to do to-night. The Saints be praised that ye came out alive, an' now ye lead the mear around fur a spell while I will take the boat an' go up the river to git the bye and gyurl in the watther. An' it's safe I think they must be, but it's I who'll help 'em out a bit while you sthay wid the ould woman."

Kate was too glad to speak, but the old man did not wait for any thanks; he saw the gratitude shining in her eyes and that was enough for him. He hastened to the river, telling his wife that if the "gyurl could ride two miles through the woods he could stand it a mile down the river."

It was an hour before he returned; an hour of intense anxiety to Kate who, although she worked busily over the horse, leading her around, steaming under her warm blanket, or else anointing her blistered legs, found the time drag heavily while they watched for the little canoe to come in sight.

At last she could wait no longer, and giving

the horse into the woman's charge, she ran to the river, where the bridge was blazing from end to end, and while she stood there the last timber gave away and it fell with a crash into the river. The smoke hung heavily and the fire had leaped to the water's edge, and was continuing its devastating course eastward as furiously as it had a half-hour previously. She wondered how Mr. O'Reilly had ever managed to pass beneath it, and while she stood there watching and wondering, she saw three dark figures come out of the field below the bridge and enter the road, and O joy! she knew it was Kirt and Minnie and their brave rescuer.

Forgetting her weariness, she ran joyfully to meet them, and such a meeting as it was. Kirt said not a word after hearing that the children were safe, but the two girls sobbed in each other's arms as if they had been separated for years instead of an hour; for to each it was like coming into safety from a living death.

Mr. O'Reilly muttered something about its being so "blamed hot," and wiped his eyes with his big handkerchief, turning away so that they could not see the tears of sympathy on his cheek.

The little boat had been carried swiftly down the river by the current. The heat was intense, but the old man had continually bathed his head with the cool water, and thanked his stars that he was not riding through the fire as Kate had done. The smoke hung so low to the water that at times he could see but a short distance ahead of the boat, but he paddled briskly on

until he came in sight of a low rock just raising its head above the water on which hung the two objects of his search.

"An' is it fishin' yees doin'," he called cheerily, "an' usin' your noses for bait? cause if it is, it's not many fish ye'll be ketchin' and it's home wid me you had bether go."

The little boat swung around in the current, and the old man steadied it firmly while Kirt helped Minnie climb in. She sank into the bottom, while Kirt sprang in and seizing an oar helped paddle the boat back, while Mr. O'Reilly gave a vivid description of Kate's ride, ending by scolding them all heartily for venturing on such an undertaking.

"'Twas a risky job, I know," assented the boy, "and Minnie and I had a dreadful run, if it was only for a few rods. We were lucky enough to be near the river when the wagon broke down, else we never could have made it. I blistered my feet but the water helped that. I am glad that I saved the harness, though it bothered me in swimming a little as I had to help Minnie."

"I was so frightened that I could hardly swim at all, and my dress was in the way but I stood it until we got here to the rock and that kept my head out of the water, but I could never have gone any farther. We are very grateful to you, Mr. O'Reilly," said Minnie, brightening up as she felt that they were in safety again.

"An' it's no more than anybody would do for childer out in the fire," responded their friend a little gruffly, "an' it's nothin' that I want

praise for at all, at all. Jist kape yer heads down as much as ye kin an' use the water plinty, so that ye won't git burnt up afore we git up to the bridge."

It was a hard pull against the current and more than once they were obliged to stop and rest before they could reach the field, where Mr. O'Reilly dragged his boat from the water into the ploughed ground and left it as he dared not proceed as far as the bridge.

Kate was for starting for home as soon as Kirt and Minnie came but Mr. O'Reilly would not hear to it and insisted on their staying until after supper when he would carry them himself. And while the old man busied himself in the care of Doll, and his wife prepared supper the three stood together watching the sea of fire rolling towards the east, but not as fiercely, for the wind was beginning to die away. The road over which they had come was now comparatively free from fire aside from scattered blazing trees, and they saw the folly of their rash undertaking, but as they had all come out alive they did not complain.

"Our tan-bark though," said Kate sadly, "that must have all gone an hour ago, for the Siding is just east of us, and nothing could prevent its taking fire."

"Of course it's all gone; but it's just our luck," said Minnie regretfully, "I don't see that it's any use for us to do anything for something always happens. But we are not alone in it for there were hundreds of cords there besides ours."

"Yes, and thousands of dollars gone. It comes as hard on us as on anyone, but don't say much about it, girls, to father. He will feel bad enough about it without hearing us complain. Let us go in. She says that supper is ready." Kirt's voice was troubled, but he was determined to not make the matter any worse by talking it over.

A very plain but bountiful supper the old woman had provided, but it seemed like a feast to the Fords. Knowing something about their poverty, as did every one for miles around, she pressed them to eat, and when they went away she bestowed upon the children a generous supply of cakes and cookies, enough to make them remember her for days to come.

They drove silently homeward; each one occupied with gloomy thoughts, a sad ending to their day of expected happiness; their bark destroyed and the berries burned. Nothing was left now but their garden, and Minnie's chance of getting a school.

Mr. Ford met them as they drove in the yard. His face was livid from the anxiety he had been enduring. "Thank God! your alive!" he exclaimed, "I could not leave your mother as she has been in hysterics for hours or I should have gone in search of you. Was the town burned out?"

"Kate yode the hossey troo de fire wiv me an' Bessie on his back: an' she took my apron she did, to yub de hossey wiv," prattled Irene, as her father took her in his arms, before the others could explain.

He heard the story of their ride in silence; not even censuring them for undertaking it; but after Mr. O'Reilly had driven hastily away, to escape his earnest thanks, he said to Kate:

"I am proud of you, my child. There are not many girls who could have ridden a horse through the fire that way."

"Better thank Doll," said the girl, "if she had balked we never could have come through."

"Doll is a noble horse, and as long as I can get her something to eat, she shall never be sold, after this day's work. You have taken such good care of her that she will not be injured. Take her to the barn, Kirt; there is corn in the box for her."

"Papa," said Minnie, gently, "you know the tan-bark has gone."

"Yes," he replied simply, "but don't say much about it. It will only worry your mother, and make matters worse. We shall get along some way."

"But the children," said Minnie, "I can't help thinking of them. But if I get a school they will be all right after all."

"And our garden is splendid; that's one comfort; but I expected to get enough money picking berries to help, but they are all burned," sighed Kate.

"We can be thankful," interposed Kirt, "that we got through alive, and that the fire is not coming this way; I do not think that we are in much danger here."

"No; but the folks east will have to fight fire

for their lives unless it rains by to-morrow. Your mother has wakened. Don't frighten her, as she has had a dreadful day," said Mr. Ford as his wife came out of the house.

"Papa tries to be brave," said Minnie, after they had gone to bed, "but I know he feels dreadfully over the tan-bark going. We will all have to work hard this summer, to make what little we have do until I can get a school."

"If we don't, I don't know what will become of Irene," said Kate.

"Or of Bessie," answered Kirt from the adjoining room.

CHAPTER IX.

Frost and Despair.

The air was so dense with smoke the following morning, that they could see but a few rods distant, except where the glare of the flames lighted the sky in the east. It was difficult to breathe the smoke-laden air, and the day wore away in great discomfort, Kate, Kirt and Minnie being too wearied from their yesterday's experiences to do much besides rest; while Mr. Ford, completely disheartened by the loss of his bark, worked aimlessly in his garden, then betook himself to a brown study of his tariff schedule, which he had laid aside when he commenced work in the woods. It was an unfavorable sign, and Kate feared that his ambition had been only of a mushroom growth after all.

Night brought rain; a drenching, soaking rain, which continued for three days, effectually putting out the terrible fires, which had devastated whole sections, destroying millions of dollars worth of property. When the rain ceased, the whole country breathed once more. The people who had been unable to return to their homes the day of the celebration came back as soon as the bridge was repaired, and thankful

that they had not lost their homes, took up life in the same old fashion.

July wore away. Mr. Ford spent his time reading politics as usual. Minnie studied desperately, knowing how much depended upon her passing the examination, while Kate divided her time between the housework and the garden, which was already giving them a good living; Kirt helping her when he felt like working, but the greater part of the time he spent with Bessie and his violin under the old hemlock.

August was ushered in with terrible heat; for two weeks the mercury hugged the hundreds during the day, relieved only at night by terrific thunder storms which rendered sleep impossible; two weeks in which humanity only existed, not lived. Day after day brought reports of terrible damage by lightning until Kate said bitterly, that she dreaded each successive night fearing that their turn would come next. She had not long to wait; for the night of the fifteenth, when the whole heavens seemed a living sheet of flame, the old hemlock, under which Kirt had spent so many happy hours, was struck, its limbs shivered into fragments, and its trunk rent from top to base. Mr. Ford's scythe which he had hung in one of the lower branches, after finishing haying, was hurled, together with a fragment of the blazing tree, into the stack of hay near the barn, which was soon consumed; but the rain soon falling in torrents prevented farther damage being done.

The deafening thunder following the blinding

flash prevented them from knowing at first what damage had been done ; but when they found that all of their hay was gone Kate gave up and cried bitterly. Her father accepted it stoically. It was but another piece of his luck, he said, and consequently no use of his trying to do anything. They would get along someway for they always had.

Minnie tried to comfort her sister with the assurance that if she got a school and the garden came out all right, they would be able to live. But Kate was not to be comforted. She felt sure that something would happen to them, and that they would have to let the children go in the Fall.

The next day was cooler ; the heat seemed to have reached its height, and the following days were marked by a great change of weather. At first it was greatly enjoyed, but as each night grew a little cooler than the preceding night had been, all grew very anxious lest early frosts should come and kill the gardens.

The fatal examination day came for Minnie, the third week of August, and dressed in the same shabby clothes she had worn the Fourth, with a dollar, the result of two weeks of pinching to pay her expenses, drove over with Mr. Ray, who with his wife had taken a great interest in their work that summer and was anxious to help them to succeed. Kate came for her at night and listened delightedly to her bright accounts of the examination and her surety of success. "They seemed to ask just what I knew ;

and the Commissioner was good enough to let me get through to-day, for he said that my papers were all excellent; so I feel sure of passing, and now we can look for a school," she said cheerfully.

Kate's heart was lighter than it had been before in many days, as they drove slowly homeward under the pale rays of the moon over the same road they had come the night of the fire. Kate shuddered as they crossed the temporary bridge and drew her thin shawl tighter around her and wrapped Irene in the blanket. "I am afraid we shall have a frost to-night. I don't think I ever knew it to be colder at this time of the year than it is now."

A pained look crossed Minnie's face as she answered: "I am afraid of one, for I am cold myself, and if there should be a frost it would kill our garden. Oh, this is the worst country to live in, it is fire, heat and frost, all in one season; and it does seem almost as papa says that there is no use of trying to do anything anyway, for the Fates seem to be against us."

"Well," Kate said sadly, "we will have to make the best of it if it does come, but it will ruin us. I don't believe pa will ever make another effort, for you know this is the third time he has tried since we moved in the woods; and each time it has been either drouth or frost that has killed all his crops."

"There is no use borrowing trouble," Minnie answered cheerfully; "we will hope that the wind will rise, or else it will cloud over, though

I must confess it looks as if it would not do either now," and she glanced at the cold, unpitying, star-lit sky above them.

Irene cried with the cold and they hurried Doll the faster, but it was after seven before they reached home. Minnie's cheerful talk about the examination raised the spirits of the family, and all went to bed feeling hopeful of the future.

Kate woke in the night feeling cold. She rose to get more bedding and looking out of the window shuddered at the sight of the clear, cold night, and crept back by the side of Irene, dreading the morning.

As the light of early morning stole into her window she arose, and dressing noiselessly stole down the stairs and taking the milk-pail from the pantry shelf went outdoors. She shivered with the cold as she stood in the clear morning air. The little lake was shrouded with a silver mist and the frosty fields glistened in the sun's early rays.

She knew that the frost had done its work. The corn leaves hung limp and dank, and all the vines were killed. Their summer's work ruined in one dreadful night. She crossed the enclosure and entered the meadow, the frosty grass stinging her bare feet. Doll came up to her whinnying from the rude shelter of boughs in the fence corner, and rubbed her nose sympathetically on the girl's arm, her warm breath freezing on the cold air. She threw her arms around the animal's neck and hugged her passionately; then with a half-sobbing cry she passed on and roused the

sleeping cow, and sitting down by her side commenced milking.

Her heart was full of despair at this new calamity, and as she looked at the ruined cornfield she felt more bitter and rebellious than she had ever felt before. "I believe it is something as ma says," she mused, "that pa is the Jonah of this Higgins District, and as long as we are here he will not prosper and no one else can; she says that the gourd has grown over him, and that it is going to rot and that we will all die; and I almost wish it was over with, for it makes no difference whether we work or not we have nothing just the same;" and she paused in her milking long enough to brush away the tears that were blinding her eyes.

"I was never more discouraged in my life," she said aloud, "and I begin to think that we might as well take hold of hands and jump into the lake together as to try to do anything again. The children will have to go, that will be the next thing." As she spoke these gloomy thoughts the sweet strains of the violin broke the stillness of the morning, and she heard Kirt singing:

 "Light after darkness,
 Gain after loss;
Strength after weakness,
 Crown after cross,

Sweet after bitter,
 Hope after fears;
Home after wandering,
 Peace after tears.

Sheaves after sowing,
 Sun after rain;
Light after misery,
 Peace after pain.

Near after distant,
Gleam after gloom;
Love after loneliness,
Life after tomb.

Joy after sorrow,
Calm after blast.
Rest after weariness,
Sweet rest at last.

After long agony,
Rapture and bliss.
Right was the pathway,
Leading to this."

The last notes died softly away, and Kate saw him lay the violin down, and stand with clasped hands in the doorway, his face turned heavenward. She knew that he was praying, and as the cool breeze tossed his sunny curls from his forehead, and the sunbeams played across his face, the peace of the angels seemed reflected upon his brow.

The milking was finished and the cow had moved away, but the girl still sat silently upon the stool. The pail had slipped from between her trembling knees, and stood on the ground by her feet; but she heeded it not, nor saw anything but the singer, nor heard anything but the song ringing in her ears:

"After long agony,
Rapture and bliss;
Right was the pathway,
Leading to this;"

she repeated softly to herself. "But no, it can't be right for our bark and hay to be burned, and our corn to be killed by the frost so that we cannot have enough to eat this winter, and the hay all gone, and the corn too, so poor Doll can't

have anything either. It is all wrong." But even as she uttered these bitter words a strange calm filled her soul. Surely it must be for the best in some way, else Kirt could not have sung as he did. "God has given him some hope or foresight," she thought as she lifted the pail and moved toward the house, vaguely wondering what calamity would befall them next.

Mr. Ford had wakened after an uneasy sleep, and as he opened the window and breathed the frosty air, he knew that his worst enemy, the frost, had come, but as he stood in despair, reflecting on his losses, he too heard the voice of Kirt in song; and as he looked over the whitened fields and heard the soothing words, and the plaintive air, his heart was stirred and the tears dimmed his eye; not a tear of despair but an awakening of his better self.

It was a sad breakfast for them all, and when the scanty meal was over with, Kate proposed that she and Minnie should take Doll that day and go in search of a school. "You are so sure you passed," she said, "but you won't get your certificate under a week, and by that time the schools will all be taken, so I think we had better go to-day."

So Doll was hitched into the lumber wagon, and the two girls with Irene, who would not be left, started off with high hopes to look for the school which would relieve them of their necessities, and the poverty staring them in the face; but although they went to all of the neighboring schools, making as long a drive as Doll's

strength would permit, they met with no success. The schools were either all engaged or else no one wanted an inexperienced teacher; words which Minnie heard so often that she asked in despair, how she could ever become experienced if no one gave her the chance to get her experience.

Night brought them home, weary and discouraged, only to travel again the next day and the next on the same fruitless quest until a week had passed. As a last resort she called on the Commissioner who told her that it would be useless to look for more that fall, as all the schools were taken; but to look for winter schools about the last of October again.

Too disheartened to even study, Minnie settled down with the rest of the family to wait. Inexperienced teachers, who had not passed as creditably as she had done, had secured schools, and she felt, poor child, as if the hand of God and man was against her ever doing anything.

The few days following the frost the weather was quite mild, and Kirt and his father did what they could to save the rest of the garden; but there was little that could be saved; a few cabbages, some turnips, and about half the bushels of potatoes that they expected to have, were all that they had to live on. With neither money from the bark, hay for the stock, food from the garden nor means of getting money, the Ford's were indeed passing through deep waters.

Mr. Ford roused himself once more, when the last chance of Minnie's getting a school was

gone, and for days tramped the country from camps to mills looking for work. Anything or everything he was willing to do, for November was drawing near, and the terrible necessity was upon him : he was like a beast brought to bay ; but although he searched diligently, begging for work in some cases, yet nothing could he get, for there was none to be had ; and at last he came back to his family utterly hopeless ; and tried to drown his troubles by working on his Tariff Schedule and waiting for something to "turn up."

But nothing turned up. It was the fall of the great financial depression of 1899, when hundreds of men were thrown out of work ; the camps and mills only running on half time, or else not at all, and no matter how great men's necessities might be they would not bring work. As the colder days of Fall came on, Kirt began hunting and trapping, and succeeded in catching enough small animals to provide shoes for himself and the older girls by the sale of their pelts, while he fashioned moccasins from skins for the little ones.

The world seemed more beautiful than ever in the lazy days of Indian Summer, when the sun shone softly on the red and gold tinted forests ; but Kate and Minnie were very sad, for another fruitless effort had been made for schools. Doll was thin, having no food but the frosted vegetation, and the girls in the lumber wagon, with their shabby worn out clothing made but a sorry appearance as they earnestly sought the

much coveted school. One blunt but well meaning man told Minnie frankly that he was sorry for her, and had wanted her to have the school, but the district would not hear to it, because she was a Ford. "We know," he said, "that your father is smart enough, but he made a great splurge here in politics, and then flatted out to be a nothin' or nobody, and the deestric say that you would do the same, and they won't let you have the school, and I think that is the reason you can't git a school anywhere."

Minnie's heart sank in despair at his words, and as they drove away she said sadly:

"It is no use, Kate; it is just as Mrs. Grimes says, that because we are Fords no one wants us; no one wants to hire a Ford to teach school, and no one wants to hire a Ford to work; and there is nothing for us to do but starve, for no matter how hard we work we can have nothing," and the girl sobbed bitterly in utter despair.

Kate listened with a desperate look on her white face. She was thinking of the children; but she said not a word as she drove Doll homewards.

That evening, as they all sat around the cheerful fire, Mr. Ford said gloomily to Kate: "It is just as I have said all along Kate, that it is no use to try, for we can do nothing. Luck's against us. I can't get work, and Minnie can't get a school. I guess we have enough vegetables to last us for a spell, but there's nothing for the cattle. You will have to sell your heifer, Kate. Mr. Ray was here to-day, and said that he would

give ten dollars for her; and well, I hate to say it, child, but poor Doll will have to go too; the cornstalks will feed the cow until spring, and then we will leave this God forsaken community."

He did not look at the children as he spoke. He knew how they loved the horse and how hard it would be for them all without her, but he did not know what else to do. Kate said nothing for a moment, and then she said sadly:

"I never thought that Doll would have to go, after she saved the children and me the Fourth. But I see how it is. She will have to go, and the heifer too; for they will starve if we keep them; and the next thing will be Bessie and Irene, for Mrs. Graves will come for them, and we will have to live on forever, being nothing but just Fords." Her voice choked with sobs and she could say no more.

Mrs. Ford was furious in a moment. "Mrs. Graves won't take the children," she cried. "I guess she'll find that the Fords are as good as anybody."

"If I could have got a school, and we had not lost everything so, we would have been almost rich," said Minnie sadly.

"If you had been thinking of heavenly things," interrupted her mother, "and not been trying to get rich we would have been all right, but as old Elder Nobbins used to say, the 'rich man could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and we were to take no thought of the morrow, for the Lord would provide.'"

Kate answered dryly: "That's just about

what we have been doing all these years until this summer, waiting for the Lord to provide; just folding our hands and waiting; but ma, you do not quote that other passage which says that 'Faith without Works is dead.' We are like the man in the parable who had but one talent and that he buried in a napkin. There is something wrong with us somewhere, or it would not be so, and everything we have be taken away from us."

"To him that hath, shall be given; and to him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath," quoted Kirt softly.

"That fits us exactly," echoed Kate, "even what little we had has been taken away; while the Rays seem to get more all the time. We were poor to begin with, and now we are as poor, as poor as Job's turkey," she added for want of a better comparison.

"Job was a good man. He was always patient," Mrs. Ford remarked reprovingly.

"Then upon my soul, you could not have been any relation to him," Kate retorted angrily, and flouncing out of the room she went up stairs and throwing herself on her bed wept long and bitterly until she could weep no more.

For hours she lay awake, pondering over the future. What was to become of them? they were poorer that fall than they had ever been before, and they had never worked harder. Her father had hardly clothes enough to keep him warm, and was so utterly discouraged that the girl knew it was useless to expect him to make another move.

Her mother, as poverty pinched the tighter, was more unreasonable than ever, blaming and scolding her husband all the time when he was in the house, and reviling him because he did not sell his books, when there was not a person in the whole Higgins District would have given a dollar for the lot. Kirt and Minnie were in despair, feeling as if there was nothing more to be done. The children would have to go anyway, there was no help for that. The heifer and Doll too; and after that—what? Their sale would not bring money enough to keep them through the winter; even now they were hungry most of the time.

There was no one to do anything but herself, she saw clearly. She fell asleep pondering the question, but woke with a start towards morning with a grand idea floating through her mind, and waking Minnie she whispered it to her.

CHAPTER X.

Seeking a New Home.

Although considerably comforted by her plan, yet it was the most miserable night she had ever spent, and she awoke in the morning pale, nervous and unrefreshed, and had but very little to say to anyone but Irene, who exercised her right as queen over her sister's heart to demand and receive attention.

Minnie, to whom a part of Kate's plan had been communicated, yet did not consider it feasible, and as she said nothing about it in the morning, thought she had given it up. But soon after breakfast as she stood by the window kneading the last flour they had into bread, she saw Kate leading the heifer from the yard; she called Kirt's attention to it, and said regretfully: "It is too bad that she has to sell Betty. We have all looked forward to having another cow and Kate has thought so much of her. She'll be a cow in another year and would be such a help."

Kirt said nothing, but returned to his seat on the wood box and went on patching his coat with great industry. He was very handy with his needle; indeed, more so than any other mem-

ber of the family, and always contrived to make his clothes and Bessie's out wear the clothing of the others.

Kate returned in the course of an hour with the heifer's halter hanging on her arm. Mr. Ford was in the shed and she sought him out and told him that she had sold Betty for ten dollars and asked to be allowed to keep half of the money herself. Mr. Ford looked at her in surprise, for she had never asked for a dollar before in her life; not even when she had picked and sold berries enough to provide the family groceries had she even asked for a cent for herself. He hesitated a moment, then answered kindly:

"Yes, child, I know you will use it wisely. I only wish you could have it all for clothes like other girls."

Kate turned away, but as she reached the door she paused and after a moment's hesitation, said: "Please promise me, pa, that you won't sell Doll or try to sell her for two weeks yet; not even *try*." There were tears in her eyes, and a sob in her voice, as she made this request.

Her father stooped to pick up a bit of wood, as he answered: "No, no, child, I won't try to sell her under a month, and then perhaps something will turn up. This money will stand us a spell. Tell Minnie to save the wheat flour, what is left, just for your mother. She can't eat corn meal very well, and I will get a sack of that to-day. Flour is so high that we will have to do without it. It is a good thing that the cow gives milk and that the hens lay a little so as to help us out."

Kate made no reply, but was a good deal relieved to think Doll was safe for a month. She went in the house and was so unusually patient with her mother, who fretted considerably over the heifer being sold to the Rays, that Kirt stopped his patching and looked at her in surprise, wondering what had taken place. As soon as she could she went up stairs where Minnie found her an hour later busily repairing an old cloak of her mother's.

"What on earth are you going to do with that, Kate?" she asked in surprise.

"Didn't I tell you in the night that I had a plan?" she answered, without looking up from her work.

"Yes, you said you had a plan; and that you were going to ask papa not to try to sell Doll for two weeks."

"Yes, and he promised me he would not, not even for a month. And I told you, too, that I thought if some one tried, that work could be found by that time; but I didn't tell you any more for I wasn't just sure myself. Now I know what I shall do, for I have thought it all out," and Kate looked up with an expression on her face that showed she would brook no opposition.

Minnie sat down beside her. "You don't mean that you are going to sell Doll yourself?" she said.

"No; but I am going to take her and run away; and that's what I am fixing this coat up for; for I am going to wear it!"

“Wear it where?”

“I don’t know yet, but *somewhere*, and that to-morrow if it does not storm. I am going to go and find a place for us to live. I am going to find pa a job.”

“*You!*” Minnie exclaimed in great surprise. “How can you find him a job? He has been everywhere.”

“Everywhere around here, you mean,” returned Kate; “you can’t stop me, Minnie Ford, for I have made up my mind. I shall take Doll, and if Kirt will go, all right; if not, I shall go alone. It is a poor story if in all this big world there isn’t a place for us where we can have our children,” her voice choked, but in a moment she went on bravely: “you tried hard and failed; pa tried hard and failed; now I shall try hard but I shall *not* fail. Don’t tell anyone but Kirt. Ma would oppose it of course, and pa would not let me go if he knew it; he would say that it was of no use, but I feel sure we can find something if we only try once more. I tell you, I shall surely go in the morning, for to-day is the 25th of October, and they will come in two weeks for the children. I met Mis’ Grimes, and Mis’ Downs last night, and Mis’ Grimes who has been mad at me ever since I told her that her room was better than her company, spoke up and said: ‘You’ll learn better some day, Kate Ford, than to insult your betters. Guess you can see now that you aint able to care for the children; just wait a week, and you’ll see what will happen.’ And when I told her that I didn’t

care what she said. that she and Mis' Downs were both hypocrites, Mis' Downs said that I might find myself in the Reform School for girls if I didn't look out; and that my mother could go to the poor-house, and the rest of the lazy tribe to begging. I was mad enough to set Carlo on them, but all I said was that it wouldn't be healthy for either of them to come to our house again. I looked them straight in the face, and without any more words I went away and left them. I don't know what we have done so wicked, but there does not seem to be any place in the wide world for us." Her brave spirit gave way and she sobbed unrestrainedly. Minnie tried to comfort her, but she wished devoutly that she would not be so saucy to those women, who were doing all in their power to injure the family.

When her grief subsided she called Kirt, and the three made their plans for an early start in the morning, before the rest of the family were awake. Minnie was to cover their retreat, and explain matters as best she could in their absence. They worked and planned to get ready while their father dreamed over his tariff schedule, and the mother dozed away the hours.

Night brought them a caller, and kind hearted Mrs. O'Reilly appeared, bringing with her a generous piece of fresh pork, which she said she thought would taste good, "to the mither," and a bag of cakes and cookies for the little ones, who screamed with delight at the sight of the unaccustomed dainties, and hugged the old Irish

woman to her heart's content. And that was not all; from her pocket she produced three pair of new mittens, which she gave to Kate, Kirt and Minnie, with the remark that she wanted to do something for a neighbor, for "it was Mr. Ford that had helped her ould mon take care of a sick cow for a whole day, and had niver asked a cint in pay, and it was not Mrs. O'Reilly who would not do a good turn for a neighbor."

Her coming brought a ray of happiness in the family; it was the first kindness they had known in weeks, for the Rays, though kind in words, never gave away even a cracker to a child; and Kate went to bed feeling very hopeful of the morrow, for she was sure there were other people in the world as kind as Mrs. O'Reilly.

Long before morning Kirt stole from the house to the barn, and gave Doll her last measure of meal, and a bundle of frost bitten corn-stalks, while Kate prepared a hasty lunch on the pantry shelf, which they ate in silence, and long before the first gray dawn crept over the settlement, they quietly drove away, promising Minnie to return in a few days, having found work and a new home for all.

Doll trotted briskly over the sandy roads, now slightly frozen, and had left Higgins Settlement by fully two miles before the sun came out, casting a cold and sickly light over the world, presaging a storm. The wind was cold and raw, and they had to sit close together to keep warm. Kirt had no overcoat, but had made himself as warm as possible by adding on

as many undervests as he possessed. Kate was bundled in the old much worn coat of her mother, her head wrapped in a gray woolen cloud.

Kirt drove rather slowly during the morning, and by noon they reached the sleepy little mill village of Black Lake, some fifteen miles distant. They decided to stop there for dinner and give Doll a good rest, so while they warmed themselves in the store, and ate their lunch of crackers and cheese, Doll enjoyed a good rest in the store sheds, with oats and an armful of good hay for her dinner.

While Kate warmed and rested herself in the store, Kirt sought out the foreman of the mills and lumber yard, and applied for work; only to be met with a prompt refusal, for the reason that no new hands could be employed while they were obliged to turn off many of their old help, and were only running on quarter time at that; the same old story which their father had heard so many times in his fruitless search for work.

The boy came back discouraged; but not so with Kate; she was eager to try again, and at two o'clock they started on their northward way to a camp, of which Kirt had been told at the mill. Two other mills lay on their route, and at each of these they stopped, but with no better results. Everywhere they heard the same old story of no work, until even Kate was becoming disheartened; but they determined to press on to Norton's camp, some ten miles farther on.

It was growing late, and also cold, but they bravely plodded on, for Doll, thin in flesh and also

weak from insufficient food, could do but little better than that. The dull grey clouds which all day had overcast the sky, began to send down heavy flakes of snow as darkness came on, and the wind was raw and chill.

"We must find some place to stay all night," said Kate, at length breaking a long silence.

"But there does not seem to be any houses at all on this road," Kirt observed doubtfully as he tucked the blanket better around them. "I do not believe we have seen a house in five miles, and Doll is so tired it does not seem as if I can make her go much farther to-night. I am half afraid, Kate, that we have come on a fool's errand after all."

"Well I am not; but that remains to be seen. First we must find some place to stay all night. Let us ask at the next place we come to. There is a light ahead, Kirt. Doll sees it already and is beginning to go a little faster, all for the sake of resting, poor thing."

But the light was only a fresh disappointment. They had entered a small settlement of Swedes, who either could not, or would not understand a word they said; and with heavy hearts they turned away in the stormy fall evening to go, they knew not whither.

The poor horse shared their dejection, and crept away at a snail's pace out of the settlement into the woods through which their road lay, toward the camp, but how far distant they were, they did not know. Kate ventured the hope that they were not far off, but added that

if they did not find a stopping place soon they would be obliged to camp out in the woods.

"We are in for it now, and we might as well make the best of it," responded Kirt. "I hope we will find a house, for you could hardly sleep in a camp even if we did find one. We must be at least twenty miles from home. We have come a good many miles both east and west, thanks to the contrary directions we have received; but our home is about twenty miles southwest of us as near as I can make out."

"We will go home by the County Line, the straight way, when we do go," said his sister, cheerfully, "and I am in hopes that when we get to the top of this hill, we will find something there. If not, we must stop soon, for Doll is about played out. Let's us walk it, Kirt. We are better able to, than Doll is to draw us. How I wish it had stayed pleasant; it is bad enough being out after dark, on a lonesome road and in a strange place, without having it storm."

They toiled slowly up the hill. The great trees sobbed mournfully above their heads and the soft snow damped their clothes, and the sand made walking difficult. Doll made frequent stops, but at last they reached the top, weary and disheartened. Kate was ready to cry with vexation and weariness, but as they climbed into the wagon, Kirt exclaimed joyfully:

"A light, Kate! I am sure that I saw a flash of a lantern ahead in the woods."

"But it is off of the road, to the left. There, we can see it flashing in and out among the

trees. There must be a road leading to it. We will stop there if they will let us, and go on to the camp to-morrow," said Kate, hopeful once more.

A few more rods, and a road led off into the woods. Doll needed no turning; she too had seen the light and knew that it promised rest at least; and breaking into a trot, she drew her load over the winding road until they came to a long low building, which glimmered with light in the darkness; while in the rear were several buildings in which flickered lanterns by the score.

"It must be the Camp," whispered Kirt, as Doll stopped. "I will go in, Kate, and see if we can't stay to-night. You hold Doll," and in a moment he had opened the door and disappeared.

It seemed an age to the girl shivering with cold and anxiety, but in a few minutes he returned, followed by a pleasant faced, middle-aged man in a white apron, whom she knew at once to be the cook.

They left the door open, and a flood of mellow light streamed out; Kate looked in and saw a long table, reaching the whole length of the room, loaded with hearty food, while at both sides sat rows of hungry men.

She had but a glimpse of the warmth and comfort within, for Kirt and the man approached the wagon. "It's all right," said the stranger in a pleasant voice. "Guess we can find a bunk for you two, to-night, and some

supper as well. 'Taint no kind of a night for kids like you to be out. Let me help you out girl; why," as he took her slight form in his arms, "you aint no bigger than my girl at home, and shivering too. Here's the chore-boy. Tend to the horse, Ted. Give her a good rubbing down, and some supper. Come around to the kitchen and I'll give you some supper, children," and he led the way through the eating-room, back into the kitchen where a great range stood glowing with heat.

They followed silently, and took the proffered seats after divesting themselves of their wet wraps, while their new friend bustled about without speaking again; but glancing towards them occasionally, he judged from their thin worn clothing and shy ways that they had learned the story of poverty, and that stern necessity had driven them out on such a night. He said nothing until the eating-room was empty, the last man having shuffled out to the sleeping shanty, and then he invited them to the tables and served them with such a supper as they had not tasted in years. Kirt made himself thoroughly at ease, and did ample justice to the repast, but Kate felt decidedly awkward, being the only girl, and wished devoutly that she had Minnie for company.

The supper work for the hundred men was finished in a marvelous short time by their new friend and his help, a boy about Kirt's age, who soon went out to the sleeping shanty, leaving them and the cook alone.

“Well,” he said kindly, “you two seem mighty young to be traveling off like this. How old are you, and where do you live? I’ve got a girl about your age and I should hate to see her away from home on such a night.”

Kirt was framing a speech in order to tell their new friend their necessities, but Kate could not wait for him, so she began impulsively:

“We’re most sixteen, sir; we are twins. Kirt and Kate Ford, and we live near Lawrence Mills. We came away because we must have work or starve, and we did not know but that Kirt could get some work here and pa too.”

The man looked grave. “It is a bad time for work, child; every day we have to turn off men. But why didn’t your father come?”

Kate made a gesture of despair as she answered simply: “Pa couldn’t. He’s discouraged. He’s been everywhere, and couldn’t get anything to do; and he said there was no use to try any more; but I told Kirt that we would try once more, before Doll had to be sold, and see if we could not get work so as to save the children; for we are so poor they are going to take the children, little Bessie and Irene, to the Leslie Home; and oh, sir, there does not seem to be a place in the wide world for us, just because we are Fords, and we have come so far to-day, too.” She broke down and cried bitterly. Kirt wiped his eyes, but said nothing. As she said the last words a man entered unobserved, and motioned to the cook not to betray him. In a few moments Kate controlled herself, and when

the cook asked her what her father could do, and why they were so poor, she forgot her reserve and told him the whole story from the beginning, omitting nothing only her mother's inability to work. She told of their garden, the tan-bark, the hay, and how it had all been destroyed, leaving them nothing but the horse and the cow, and the prospect of losing Doll at least.

The cook heard her through silently, and when she had finished he said kindly:

"Well, well, little girl. It's too bad. It's mighty hard luck you've been a havin'. I'm sorry for you; sorry as I can be. I'll make a bed here for you on this bench, and the boy can sleep with me. In the morning maybe the foreman can shake up something for your father to do. I'll speak to him. My chore-boy is going to leave soon, and I'll give you a chance, Kirt, in his place, if you want it."

Kirt was overjoyed and Kate no less so. The listener had slipped silently away and neither of the two knew that he had heard their pitiful story.

By nine o'clock Kate was fast asleep on the bench made comfortable by many blankets, and hidden from view by a curtain of coats. Four o'clock came early and the cook came down from the chamber and busied himself about the breakfast, but though he worked softly, the girl soon awoke, and lay silently watching him and wondering how he could bake such lovely bread as she had eaten the night before.

After the men had eaten their early breakfast

and had gone to work she and Kirt had theirs with their kind friend. Hardly had they finished when the foreman entered, and coming to them asked them many questions about their circumstances and what they thought their father could do.

Kate took upon herself the task of answering: "He can do anything with an ax," she replied eagerly, "and he is as good a man to work as you ever saw; but sir, it is just as I tell you; everything he tries ends in failure, and I can't see how he is to blame either."

The man smiled at the loyal little maid before answering, and Kate thought he was the nicest looking young man she had ever seen; and when he told her a few moments later that he would give her father a job at \$12.00 a month and board until the first of March, her joy knew no bounds, and she was sure that he and the cook were the nicest men in the world.

A little later the cook, who seemed to be in a conspiracy with the foreman to give them pleasant news, told them that there was a little house about half a mile distant, belonging to a man living in the camp, who would let them live in it during the winter if they would pay the taxes on the land in the spring, which would only amount to between four and five dollars; and that Kirt would get a dollar or so a month above his board, for his work.

But Kate thought of Doll, and asked the foreman if she could not work for her board as well; and as she was large and strong, though thin at

the present time, he agreed to give her a chance to earn her own living; more to please the girl than for any need he had of her. But Kate did not know this; her proud spirit would have revolted at charity although she was anxious to work herself, and before she left she had the promise of some of the camp washing to do.

The day was pleasant, though keen and cold, and at an early hour they drove merrily away with the lightest hearts they had known in many a day. Doll, too, partook of their high spirits, and made the long journey home in much better time than they had come the preceding day. On their way home they stopped at the house, for Kate with her eye for business would not agree to anything until she had seen what the house was, herself; but found to her delight it was just as represented, with a comfortable barn, and an excellent well of water, besides.

The cook, who had scorned her offer of payment for their good cheer, bestowed upon them a well-filled lunch basket, which upon opening they found to contain lunch enough for ten; for there were two whole pies, cakes and doughnuts, and a generous supply of bread, butter and cold meat.

They were delighted with the contents, but ate only of the meat and bread, wishing to save the rest as a treat for their family. At the little mill village they stopped again for a noon rest, and Kate invested a good share of her five dollars in grain and groceries, buying a pound of the best green tea for her mother's comfort.

It was nearly dark when they reached home. It had been a joyous day for the twins, but a gloomy one enough for the rest of the family, but when they entered, bringing their good news, their presence banished the gloom and sadness of the home and all the scoldings and complainings which had been treasured up for their arrival were forgotten when they had told their success; that is, when Kate told it, for Kirt had but little to say as usual.

Kate soon had the table set with the good things from the lunch basket, and her mother comforted with her cup of fragrant tea; the children revelling with all the cakes they could eat, and her father looking like a different man with the prospect of steady work before him.

He had passed the two days of their absence in a state of anxiety, bordering on hope and fear, saying little to anyone; while Minnie had had a severe task in caring for the little ones, Irene especially, who rebelled continually at having Kate away, and with her mother, who had been in a continual state of nervous apprehension, feeling sure that they would be killed before they could ever return.

The Fords were a happy household that night, and for the two following weeks were as busy as bees, getting ready for their new home. Two of the members of the family, besides Doll, were sure of their board at least; and the money that their father could earn monthly seemed like a small fortune to them. Their vegetables they were to take with them, and a few days later

Mr. Ford hired one of Mr. Ray's strong horses to put beside Doll, and drew a large load of furniture including his books to their new home, —the twenty-five miles to the camp. Next went the vegetables and the remainder of their furniture; and the third trip the family went, followed by Carlo and old Liny, the cow, leading behind.

It had taken a good share of two weeks to accomplish all this. The neighbors had heard with surprise of their intended move, but no one but the Rays really knew anything about it. To these kind friends Kate had told the circumstances and their future prospects. Mrs. Downs and Mrs. Grimes came over to make a farewell call, but Kate who had seen them coming was prepared for any emergency, and persuaded her mother to go with Kirt into the woods while she and Minnie did the entertaining. The good neighbors were full of talk and questions, but to their queries they were answered either in monosyllables or else not at all, and at last wearying of obtaining any information they took their departure, Mrs. Downs saying in parting that she hoped Kate would reform her ways, so as to meet her in the other world, if not again in this. Then Kate answered, the hot blood flaming her cheeks, that as there was an especial place for hypocrites and liars, and as she was not either, she had no expectations of ever seeing either of them again; and that she should consider it a misfortune if she ever did. This was her parting with the two worthies. The next day they were

in their new home, after a hard day's journey over the frozen roads; and the tired travellers proceeded to set up the stove and unpack the dishes and beds as best they could; but it was a very discouraging task getting that supper; the girls were sure that they knew just where everything had been packed, but as a matter of course neither knew where anything was, and nearly everything had to be handled over before they could find what they wanted, and the little clock struck ten before a cup of tea could be made or a bite eaten; then they all tried to make themselves comfortable by camping down on piles of bedding and straw ticks and keeping a fire all night, in order to keep warm.

The next day Kirt went back for the few remaining things which Doll could draw alone, and returned Mr. Ray's horse. The price of Kate's heifer had paid their transportation to their new home, and they had been able to bring their chickens and cornstalks with them.

While he was gone the girls labored diligently to bring order out of chaos, and for the first time realized what a dreadful thing it is to move.

CHAPTER XI.

The New Home.

A most busy day was spent straightening the house and in making things comfortable, but the little board house offered but cramped and uncomfortable quarters at best. The two rooms had to be utilized for living and sleeping apartments; the first room was the kitchen and living room while the second room was curtained to make two apartments where their beds were set up; one for their parents, and the other for the two little girls, while the older girls slept in the little loft which they called the chamber, out of courtesy. Kirt was to remain at the cook shanty all of the time, but Mr. Ford decided to spend his nights at home so as to avoid the vermin always found in the sleeping bunks of the lumber camps, which are built in tiers around the sides of the rooms, with the great stove standing in the center; around which gathered the many workers of the forest when their day's labor was done, and while they dried their socks and garments by the roaring fire, made the old log walls ring with laughter and gay songs.

Mr. Ford went cheerfully to work. The foreman provided him with such clothing as was

needed, to enable him to work out in the cold and snows of winter, and deducted the amount from his first month's wages; but when he came in at night with his gaily plaided Mackinaw jacket and pants, felt boots, rubbers and socks, and laughingly brushed the soft November snow-flakes from his scarlet skull-cap, the children screamed with laughter; but not so with Mrs. Ford. She burst into a tirade of scoldings and complainings at the disgrace of his coming down to being a camp-rowdy, and dragging her off to live in a shanty in the woods, for, she wailed, when she was a girl, no one lived in shanties but the Irish; and "I'd never married you Andrew Ford, if I had thought you was going to bring me to this. You might a' staid in politics, back in Pennsylvany where you belonged, and where I could go to meeting, and here there aint a meeting nearer than Norton City, and there aint no way of getting there, when we live back in the woods like this."

The smile died from Mr. Ford's face at her words, and he silently hung up his cap; but the girls, who had been worn out during the day by their mother's complainings of their present situation, refusing to see how vastly better it was than their former home, had both resolved to keep all such unpleasantness from their father, and make his home as pleasant as possible, hastened to show him the various little comforts they had contrived, and tell him the bright little sayings and doings of the day, and soon succeeded in banishing all care and sadness

from his brow; and with the little girls in his arms, he forgot his troubles and told them stories of the woods and the great strong horses, until they fell asleep.

Kirt did finely in his work in the cook-shanty, as he was quick and willing to learn, and he soon became a general favorite, not only with the cook, but with the foreman and men as well; who when the day's work was done gathered about him, and listened in rapt attention to the violin. The rough life of the camp did not injure the boy; his nature was too pure to fall in with vice readily, and as he had an instinctive horror of anything low and mean he came through the ordeal unscathed; and although the men did not know or realize it, yet they were the better men for his being there.

So busy were they all that the winter passed so swiftly as to be almost unnoticed. The girls secured washing enough to bring them in about five dollars a month, and this amount enabled them to buy a supply of warm clothing for themselves and the little girls. Mr. Ford's wages provided for their table and for the cow and chickens, leaving a little besides for clothing; and taking everything into consideration, notwithstanding that they were still miserably poor, yet they were the best off they had been in years; and all were content, that is, all but the mother, who poor woman, with her failing mind, could not appreciate their present blessings and longed for something unattainable.

They were in another county, and Minnie

found spare time to study for the approaching examination in hopes of obtaining a school in the spring. One Sunday when Kirt was home he said to his sisters:

“Did you know, girls, that Foreman Dick’s name is Graves, Richard Graves?”

“No,” they both exclaimed in a breath, and Kate added that she always thought his name was Dick, as everyone called him that.

“I did not know it either, until lately,” said Kirt; “the other day when Mr. Norton was out there I heard him call him Mr. Graves, and I’ll bet a cent that he is some relation to that lady who came to our house. And did you know that the Leslie Home is here in Norton City? I heard Mr. Norton speaking of that too.”

“No,” answered Kate, “I did not know that the Home was here; but I shouldn’t wonder if he was some relation to that lady. It has always been a mystery to me, why he was so good to give pa a job when they had more men than they wanted then; but I guess he is not sorry, for pa has been good help.”

“Yes, and Mr. Norton is a kind man too,” assented Kirt. “I believe Dick had heard of us before. The boy’s all think that there is no one like him.”

Minnie looked up a little shyly and said: “We like him too but we never see him except the rare occasions when he has been here, as we never go to the camp; but last week when I did his washing I mended one of his shirt sleeves, and he sent me this little book by papa,” and she held up

a pretty volume of poems for her brother to see.

Kirt took the book in his hand. "That's just like him; he is the right kind even if he is a Camp fellow," glancing slyly at his mother as he spoke.

The months wore away; months of steady work and contentment; although the united earnings of the family were less than twenty dollars a month, they were happy. The girls had developed into good housekeepers, and were making rapid progress in cooking, thanks to the cook's kind instructions, on days when he could leave the camp for an hour or so afternoons; and many had been the broken loaves of bread, pieces of cake and pie, which had found their way to their household instead of going to waste as formerly; favors which aided their slender purse greatly.

But with the waning of winter, came a break of the camp's industry; soon it was to break up for the summer, and for good, as all their timber had been cut, and the little family would soon be without an income again. Mr. Ford talked of going away, the same old story, and the twins and Minnie felt considerably disheartened over the prospect, but Kate decided to go and see the cook and ask his advice as to their future course; and choosing an hour when she knew that he would be at liberty she went over to talk to him. She did not ask her father's advice, for she knew from past experience that he would wait for something to turn up; but she believed in turning things up themselves, as she

grimly expressed herself to her two counsellors.

She did not hesitate to tell her friend her trouble, for the man had always a kind word and helpful deed for the "Little hustler," as he called the girl. He listened to her quietly, then said:

"I think I understand your necessities quite well. Your father is a good worker, and if you were on a good farm you could make a living. Now, I know of a place about a mile from here, towards town; you know where it is,—the old Stone place they call it; a good frame house and barn on the left hand side of the road; rather lonely, but a good place. The owner is a widow, and lives in Ludington, where my home is. Her husband died some ten years ago, and as she couldn't live there alone she went to the city and dressmakes. She has tried to sell the place all these years but there hasn't been much sale for land hereabouts, and now the fences are all tumbling down, and the house is getting out of repair, but I think she would be glad to rent the place to anyone who would keep it in repair, and ask nothing but the taxes. There used to be a nice little orchard, and it used to raise a pile of stuff when Ike was alive, but it is going to ruin fast enough now.

"But do you think she would let us go on the place for that?" the girl inquired eagerly.

"Yes, I do," he answered. "I will write to her to-day and send the letter down by the engineer to-morrow morning when he makes his first trip to Norton City with the logs."

"But please do not say a word to pa about it, un-

til you hear from her. Kirt won't say anything about it, either; but pa would be sure to say not to do anything about it, for he surely is going to leave in a few weeks and go either east or west, north or south, up or down, or somewhere or other, and Minnie and I will have to see what we can do if there is anything done."

The man laughed. He understood Mr. Ford's disposition and saw that he was like a piece of machinery that worked well when there was a power behind it, but that he had little ability to start off for himself, but he saw in the girl a very capable little engineer, and he wished to help her accordingly; so he promised to say nothing regarding their plans and Kate went home rejoicing to tell her good news to Minnie.

A week later and they were surprised one evening by a call from Mr. Graves, and after chatting for a few moments, he told Minnie that when he was home the Sunday before his father had told him that he was in search of a teacher, and that he had told him of Minnie; and that he thought if Minnie would drive over there, some ten miles distant, the following Wednesday afternoon that she could have the school. "Doll is suffering for exercise," he said, "and you can easily make it in a day."

Minnie was delighted. She had just passed another successful examination and she and Kate were on the point of looking for schools again but were saved the task by Mr. Graves' kindness. He also gave Kate a letter from Mrs. Stone, saying they could have the place for the necessary

repairs and paying the taxes; and with these two pieces of good news the girls went to bed almost too delighted to sleep.

Mr. Ford was easily persuaded to try his luck at farming once more, for a year at least, as long as he could have all the fertilizer he needed from the camp, simply by hauling it; so the bargain was concluded at once, and by the time the camp had broken up the Fords had moved once more.

A pleasant surprise awaited Minnie on going to her school, for Mr. and Mrs. Graves were the same people who had called upon them when they lived in the Higgins' settlement; and then they learned for the first time of their earnest sympathy for them, and that their son had heard Kate's pitiful story that night, and knowing of them before had made a place for them in the camp. This was good news to them, but the best of all was when Mr. Graves quickly engaged Minnie to teach the school, four months, at twenty-five dollars a month, letting her board with them during the term; and the girls went away feeling rich indeed.

The first of April found them in their new home, and Minnie in the school room. And although the plastering was broken in many places, the once neatly papered walls and white-washed ceiling yellow with neglect and age, yet to Kate's inexperienced eyes the cozy house with its bay-window in the parlor was a marvel of beauty; and by exercising all of her ingenuity and taste she made the little rooms look quite cozy and home-like. With the aid of

glue-pot and varnish she mended and refreshed what broken furniture she could, and persuaded her father to put together many of the broken wrecks of their past grandeur, and soon had a better furnished and more home-like house than they had known before in years, for there they had plenty of room above, as well as below.

Kirt and her father were very busy those bright spring days repairing the fences and in putting in the early crops, utilizing as much land as they could possibly work, preparatory for another season of prosperity; and as Kate stood in the little porch and watched them at work in the clean broad fields sloping gently to the south and east, she thought it was the pleasantest spot in the world to live; so totally unlike their former home, and so much freer from frost in its hilly location than the flat muggy lands of the Higgins settlement. The scene was not really more beautiful than that of her former home, but to her eyes, lit with hope and happiness, it was the fairest spot on earth. The sandy road which lay like yellow ribbon through the first velvety green of spring stretching towards town, under the budding trees filled with singing birds, gave her a hope that in its course lay prosperity for them. Everything about her home filled her heart with delight, especially the sweet, pure air laden with the scent of early flowers; and she thought with a prayer of thanksgiving on her lip, what a beautiful thing it was to be young in the springtime of the year. From the win-

dow the best view only gave them the pine choppings from which came the many clangings of cowbells, as the sleek cattle of the town roamed at will getting their living from the wild pony grass of the plains; and as she watched them she wished there was something that she could do to earn a living for herself aside from staying at home.

“If I could only do something to help,” she mused, “but there seems to be nothing for me to do, only to keep the house, help out in the field a little and go for Liny at night. Now if I could sew; but I can’t. I can’t even make my own clothing decently; and I can’t be spared to go from home to do housework; and so I must stay here and earn nothing, and I know very well that the fifteen dollars pa has ahead won’t last very long to buy seed and keep us a-going; and I do not like to think of Minnie’s providing for us all, though she is willing to do it, but she needs so many things for herself; but if we can live through it until we get our crops gathered we shall be all right.” But a little shade of anxiety had settled on her face which did not lift for some time, and as she worked she pondered and wondered what she could do to hasten their prosperity.

It was the fifth of May. Just a year from the day she had had her awakening, and as she dished up a great dish of creamy bean soup for their dinner, she was dreamily thinking of the past, and of the change which a year had wrought, when her father’s voice at the door startled her

from her reverie. "Kate!" he was saying, "here's a gentleman who has lost his cow; she has been gone for a week, and he says he cannot get any trace of her; and I told him that I thought you could find her and fetch her in before night."

"I!" Kate turned in surprise, "I! why pa, I never saw the cow; and how do you suppose I could get her if I had? I would not know where to look."

"Of course you don't, but you know all about these pine choppings for only last night you said you believed you knew every cattle haunt for five miles around, as Liny has led you a pretty chase several times."

"Well, I think she does," assented the girl, "I think she takes a new road every day, but that's no sign that I could find his cow," she added as the stranger entered the room with her father; a middle-aged man with the unmistakable air of a gentleman.

Kate offered him a chair, then proceeded to take up the rest of the dinner. Her father offered him a seat at the table, and much to the girl's horror, he accepted and ate heartily of the bean soup and bread, pronouncing it the best dinner he had had in months. During the meal he described his fine Jersey cow, telling how highly he valued her; and as he rose from the table he told Kate that if she would bring her in he would give her two dollars for trying and five dollars if she succeeded; for he was no other than Mr. Norton, the owner of the camps, and the largest mills in the city.

The prospect of earning so much money was a tempting bait to the girl, and as soon as the dinner work was disposed of she coaxed Irene to sleep, and as soon as the child was quiet she strapped a blanket securely on Doll's back, mounted her and was off on her search for Mr. Norton's valuable cow.

CHAPTER XII.

The Search for the Cow.

In the pine regions of the northwest, the hustling little towns spring up in the forest which is quickly cut away, leaving a desolate background of choppings on the barrens, as they are called; and it was through these pine choppings which skirted Norton City on nearly every side that Kate had to search for the cow among the herds of city cattle and farmers' cows, all of which roamed at their own sweet will during the day, to be gathered in at night and returned to their respective owners by the boys who had them in charge.

Doll galloped swiftly on, where the path permitted, or else picked her way carefully over fallen logs and around brush heaps, until Kate had crossed and recrossed several sections near her home, following the winding cattle paths which radiated in every direction, examining each herd of cattle for the missing creature, mounting every hill and listening with strained ear for every tinkle of a bell and watching for any sign of a distant herd. She judged that the missing cow had probably joined one of the farmer's herds on the other side of the town, and

after she had satisfied herself that she was not among the town cattle, she left the plains near her home and skirted the town, taking the path over the hills, and came to a part of the country where she had never been.

As the cow had been missing for a number of days, she felt quite sure of recognizing her among other cattle by the swollen condition of her udder. The afternoon was quite far advanced, and she was several miles from home in a desolate stretch of the choppings, when she came upon a small herd of young cattle, and among them the creature for which she was in search; a small, graceful creature of a light fawn color with evident marks of pure blood, but as wild as a deer, for when the girl wheeled Doll and took a path for the purpose of heading her toward the road, she broke into a run, starting toward the hill with the whole drove following her in hot pursuit.

Now began a race to see who would come out ahead—the truant cow, or the determined girl. Kate gave Doll free rein, and holding on firmly, kept her seat, as the horse leaped logs and brush in her rush across the plains to prevent the cow from reaching the hills. By an adroit movement the girl headed her off, and then began another race back toward the road, the cow being filled with a spirit of contrariness, going just the opposite direction from what the girl wanted; but she was obliged to let her take her own course, which finally led her in the road. Kate followed until she came to the first house where a

man was working in the garden. Riding up to him she asked him about the cow, which was feeding quietly by the side of the road.

"It isn't mine," he said, coming down to the road, "she has been with my cattle about four days and I would have milked her if I could have caught her; she needs it badly enough."

"Well," Kate answered, "she is the one I want and will you please help me catch her? She belongs to Mr. Norton, and I've been hunting her for him."

"We'll try," agreed the farmer, and letting down the barnyard bars, he coaxed the young cattle in with salt. Kate retreated, and after some hesitation the stray cow decided to go in too; but after she had eaten her salt she was alert and watchful and gave them a pretty chase until she was finally cornered and a rope put on her horns.

The farmer eyed her doubtfully. "Now you've got her," he said, "I don't know what you are going to do with her. She won't lead, and she'll jerk away from you in a jiffy."

"I guess she won't," said Kate confidently. "Give me the rope, please," and as she spoke she led Doll forward, and securely knotted the cow's rope into the blanket girt.

The man looked on in admiration. "By ginger!" he exclaimed, "but it would take a woman to think of that! you're plucky not to be afraid of her. There are not many girls but what would think twice before going up to a cow like that. But she may hook your horse with those sharp horns of hers before you get to town."

"I am not afraid of cows," laughed Kate, "but I am not going to ride. I shall walk between them, holding the rope close to her horns, and if she tries to hook, why Doll knows how to use her heels. That's all. How far is it to town?"

"Pretty near five miles. You must hurry if you're going to walk, for it will be dark before you get there. Keep straight ahead."

Kate thanked him for his assistance and started on, while he stood and watched her, marvelling at her grit and determination. By walking between the two animals, and holding the cow firmly by the head she succeeded in getting the unruly creature along; but at times her movements were decidedly erratic, for she would try to start forward, and would career madly around the horse's head, but the sharp blows from Kate's hickory stick would bring her back to her place again. Then she would try to run, but Doll understanding her capers, would settle back on her haunches with so much force that she would be brought to a standstill. Holding back herself was no better, for Doll would instantly break into a trot, dragging her along willy-nilly, and so the first two miles were covered before the cow made up her mind to behave herself, weary of her fruitless efforts, and give Kate a chance to breathe.

The poor girl was wearied nearly to death, but she kept along bravely. Her shoes, which only by careful mending she had been able to keep on her feet for the last few weeks, were

tattered and ruined. Her calico dress, new in the winter, was in a dilapidated condition, fringed around the bottom and torn in several places, utterly ruined by her wild ride through the slashings.

She came at last in sight of the town, gilded in the rays of the setting sun, and looking very fair and peaceful to her tired eyes. She rested a few moments by the side of a little brook, watered the horse and cow, and bathed her heated face and hands, smoothing back her wavy red-brown hair and braiding it as best she could.

"I am a pretty looking object," she thought disconsolately, "to go into town looking like this; but I am in for it and I shall have to go ahead now. What would Minnie say if she could see me? she is prouder than she is handsome any day; and for her life she wouldn't have dared gone for this cow. It is as much as she ever will do to go near old Liny, who wouldn't harm a kitten. But I guess I am like those two frogs that fell into the milk-can. One of them was discouraged and fell to the bottom and drowned; the other kept on kicking in trying to get out until he kicked up a little pat of butter, on which he sat until he could get out. I am the kicking frog for I've kicked for a year to get out of the can, and here I am with a horse and a cow, torn dress, and ragged shoes, to go into town; but I might as well go ahead for there is no backing out now," and mustering all the courage she possessed she started forward, walking between her unique companions.

But as she plodded up the street, lined on both sides with pretty, tasteful houses and thronged with people of all classes who eyed her curiously, her face tingled with shame and she felt as if she would never be able to get to the fashionable part of the town where Mr. Norton lived; but by threading the alley ways, and avoiding the principal streets she reached the street where he lived, but was obliged to traverse nearly its length before she reached his home; but here she experienced her greatest annoyance, for the street was full of children who laughingly called her the cow-bell as she passed along. But she kept quietly ahead, hurrying to keep pace with the cow whose ambition quickened as she came near her stable, until she reached his elegant residence. An alley way offered her a road to the barns, and down that she disappeared from the sight of the people, finding the stable-boy at the door, who recognized the cow and took her in charge.

She dropped wearily into a seat, while the boy went for Mr. Norton, returning in a few moments, saying that the gentleman wished her to come in the house. Kate's heart sank within her. This was a worse trial than leading the cow through the streets; but she followed the boy without a word into the house, and into the dining-room where the great man sat at the table.

He greeted her courteously, and presented her to his wife, who invited her to tea; but Kate declined, for although ravenously hungry she would not sit at the table, dressed as she

was, with them. It was bad enough to be in their elegant room. She was so ill at ease that Mr. Norton did not urge her again, but asked her about her trip and praised her heartily for her success, which she told as briefly as possible, making but little of her long hard ride.

"You are worth more than all the cattle herders in town," he said warmly, "and here is your money which you have richly earned. I do not believe there was another girl or woman in town who would have dared to do as you have done."

"I am not afraid of cattle," she answered simply, "and as you wanted me to find her, I was glad to do it, for I wanted to earn something, and I can't go away from home."

"No, I see how it is; your mother isn't well, and the two little girls need a good deal of care. Wife, it was a capital dinner she gave me to-day. I wish you would come here and teach our girl how to make such bean-soup. I never ate better," he said heartily.

Kate flushed with pleasure as she answered: "I was ashamed not to have better, but I only know how to cook a few things, and that is one of them."

"Better do a few things well than many ill," assented the lady; "he has spoken several times of your nice dinner, and he was just saying that he wished you would take charge of our cow. The boys make such wretched work. Several times she has come home bruised, and it was only through neglect that she got away this time."

"Yes; that is just what I wish you would do. She could feed near your home with your cow, and if you could get a few other cattle I think you could make it pay. If you will take charge of my cow next Monday, I will see some of my neighbors, and get them to let you take their cows. In the west, you know, women become famous as cattle-herders and I think you would make a success of it, as it would be earning at home. What do you say? it will give you a chance for a little money for your self."

Kate thought a moment. "It isn't for myself only that I want to earn. It is to help get ahead and not leave so much for my sister Minnie to do. Yes, I will do it, Mr. Norton, anyway I'll try it. I am not ashamed of being poor and I will do anything that is honorable, but I would be ashamed of being lazy."

"You are a brave girl," said Mr. Norton approvingly. "I have two cows, and I can safely promise you two more. Be here by six next Monday morning. I paid the boy seventy-five cents for the two, but I will give you a dollar for them during each week of the season."

Kate went away with a light heart. At the first dry goods store she stopped and bought gingham enough for another skirt to take the place of the torn one she had on. A part of her five dollars went for a pair of shoes, also a sack of wheat flour and a bushel of oats.

"But where shall we put all these?" said the clerk doubtfully, "you can't carry them all on horseback. Where shall we send them?"

"I can take them," she answered; "if you will get a bag and put the flour into one end and the oats in another, and sugar enough on the flour side to balance the oats, then it can lay across my lap safely."

"Seven pounds of sugar will do it," and the clerk swung the bag and she rode slowly toward home, feeling very light-hearted and happy over her afternoon's work, and wishing that she might earn as much every day, but she wondered a little grimly what her mother would say to her herding cows.

"If I am like the frog in the milk can," she soliloquized, "I have kicked up a bigger pat of butter than I ever imagined I could."

CHAPTER XIII.

Kate as a Cattle-Herder.

The whole Ford household was in a turmoil. Mrs. Ford's indignation knew no bounds. It would only add another disgrace to her family which had already so much to bear, owing to Mr. Ford having left politics and Pennsylvania, and now when she was near a meeting which she could attend by exerting herself, to have Kate talk of herding cows was more than flesh and blood could stand calmly.

Minnie too, who was spending her Sunday at home was quite indignant. She did not think, now she was earning, that there was any need of Kate doing such boyish work, and she was willing to do with little herself and help the family until they were better off; anything and everything rather than have Kate take charge of the cattle. Even Mr. Ford was doubtful of her success and tried to dissuade her from undertaking it, although he was immensely proud of her spirit and horsemanship.

Kirt was the only one who fell in with her plans and agreed to do all that he could to help, offering to go for the cattle himself. "Only," he added, "as I can't ride half as

well as you can, or manage a cow either as well, I am afraid that I could not make it pay alone."

"I wish you all could see it as I do," said the girl impatiently after she had listened to every possible objection over and over again. "Minnie says it isn't lady-like, and that it will bring me into notoriety and make people make fun of me, and the boys all call me 'cow-bell' again. For the latter I do not care, as I shall go along minding my own business; and all that I will have to do will be to drive the cows up the streets night and morning, and put them in their stalls, and during the day they can feed here on the Plains and will be but very little trouble. Minnie says it isn't lady-like. Well, I know herding cows isn't exactly the work ladies do, but as I shall ride Doll, it won't look as bad as if I walked; and it's a lot more honorable than letting my sister, who only gets twenty-five dollars a month, and pays her board out of that, support the family until pa can get some money from his crops next fall; and I'd like to know, Minnie Ford, how far you expect your sixty-eight dollars will go towards getting the clothes both you and I need, to say nothing of ma and the children, besides providing the groceries, and getting the other things we need; when you know as well as I that we are so poor that we haven't a half dozen whole dishes hardly and the other day when Mr. Norton was here, I had to have the bean soup dished up in a pan, and everyone of us but him ate it out of tin dishes, and he had the only bowl we have. I was

ashamed enough to sink, but I had to stand it. Now, I am tired of being so poor, and as I can't possibly go away from home to earn, and I have this chance to earn something, I am going to try it. Sink or swim, live or die, I shall try the work Monday, so there!" she added dramatically.

Her father laughed. Her speech had won him to her way of thinking. Minnie said nothing; she saw the reason in her sister's remarks, but her pride revolted at having her undertake such unusual work for girls. Mrs. Ford was indignant, and at the girl's remarks about being so poor, she added parenthetically that they ought to be resigned to being so poor, for the wicked flourished like a green bay tree, and the "Lord loveth those whom he chasteneth."

"Then upon my soul!" Kate ejaculated angrily, "we must be especial favorites, for it has been nothing but chastening ever since I can remember."

Mr. Ford and Minnie laughed outright. Kirt whistled to hide his merriment, and Mrs. Ford burst into tears, declaring that she always knew that the girl would go to perdition, and that she could do nothing to stop it, and that she was taking Irene with her too.

Kate softened at her mother's tears, and promised her that the first money she could spare she would use in getting her a decent dress and other articles, so that she could go to the chapel in the town when she wished to.

As she expected, she carried her point, and

early Monday morning she and Kirt started out. They lived a little over two miles from the town, and Kirt walked briskly on beside Doll while Kate chatted merrily over the prospects of adding to the family's income, arriving at Mr. Norton's about six, taking out his two cows, and four more in the neighborhood, which the chore-boy told them Mr. Norton had secured for them; so instead of two they drove out six cows that morning. But they soon discovered that driving six cows through the streets of a town dotted with green lawns was no easy task, for the creatures showed no intention of keeping in the middle of the streets nor of turning the right corners; but Kate rode along at the side, keeping a little in advance and reaching the turns first, and at last they succeeded with Carlo's aid in getting them safely out of town without receiving more than half a dozen scoldings from property owners who held all cattle herders and cattle in especial abomination, and considered that the drivers did not care how much damage their cattle did by trampling over the velvety lawns, or cropping the tempting shrubbery; for sad to say these well-meaning people knew but little of the mischievous disposition of the mild-eyed bovine.

Kate was tired and nervous when at last she reached home, and Doll was chafing at her bit with vexation; and in her equine brain she knew that she had been careered around on the gallop more than a hundred times since they started. Kirt's legs were aching from their unaccustomed

exercise, and the sweat ran down his face in streams.

"By Jove, Kate!" he exclaimed as he mopped his brow, "that's the hardest work I ever did. I guess that you and I will earn the three dollars we receive from this week's work."

"You're right. We surely will," assented the girl as she slipped from Doll's back and removed the blanket, "but they won't act that way when they learn just which way to go. But I must have a saddle just as quick as I can earn one, for I have nearly broken my neck and back too a dozen times this morning."

"But you didn't fall," said the boy in surprise.

"Of course I didn't fall," she retorted, "but you get on that horse sideways, just as I do, and turn such sharp corners, be running Doll one minute and walking the next, holding yourself to the horse by the muscles of your back and limbs, and all the time be thinking about those pesky cows and every fretful old man and woman on the street, and I guess you had rather go a foot."

Kirt laughed. "There, Kate, that's more complaining than I ever heard you do before; but I know you need a saddle, and just as soon as we get ten dollars you shall have one."

When they came in sight of the house, Mr. Ford came to meet them driving old Liny, and was all interest to know how they had succeeded. Kate made no complaints to him, and the whole family thought better of her business now she had made a beginning.

Kirt, with Carlo, was to spend the day watching them in the choppings, while Mr. Ford worked alone in the fields. Kate returned to the house and after an hour's rest did the housework although she was sore in every muscle.

At five o'clock she was on Doll's back, and helped Kirt drive the cattle towards town. They went very quietly, sobered by the day's feeding, and contented themselves with giving each other sly digs in the ribs with their sharp horns, or else trying their strength with locked horns, only to be parted by a sharp blow from the whip. When they entered the town the streets were full, and Kate felt the same embarrassment she had when she led home Mr. Norton's cow, for everyone seemed to be looking at her, and the small boys hooted again at the "cow bell," but she looked neither to the right nor left, but went ahead as if she owned the town. But, poor girl, she was soon to realize that it is far different to be a Cattle Queen of the West, than to be a cattle herder of the Western Pine City, but her dauntless spirit and independent nature came to her aid, and by the first of the following week she had fifteen cows to her credit, and by the first of June they drove a herd of thirty cows from the town each morning at an income of fifteen dollars a week.

The kind words of encouragement she received from her fast increasing list of patrons greatly encouraged her, and the gratifying prospect of doing well, carried her beyond minding the scoffings of the thoughtless or the cold stares of the

haughty. Nothing succeeds like success, and after a few weeks of patient work Kate found that she was winning the respect of the better class of people, and that her work though hard and arduous was winning her friends; but the best of it all was, they were having plenty of money, and were adding many comforts to their home.

Kirt watched them all day in their feedings, and seated on a high stump whiled away the long sunny hours with his violin, while faithful Carlo kept the cattle in range; but when the heat of the noon hour came on, and the cattle had sought the shady banks of the grassy pond, and lay down contentedly chewing their cuds, then he would fling himself on the grass and dream the time away. It was an ideal life for the boy who loved both music and solitude, and in fine weather his life was all that he might ask for; but when the days were dark and rainy and he was obliged to leave his violin at home and sit beneath his umbrella all day it was not so pleasant, but he whistled and sang, making the best of his discomforts.

As their herd increased, Mr. Ford went with them to town nights and mornings, attending to his work on the farm during the day. The steady prosperity which had followed the family ever since their move, had encouraged his ambition and he worked cheerfully and well; a respectable suit of clothes once more, and plenty of well-cooked nourishing food had made a man of him, and he laid aside his dreams of tariff-re-

form, and contented himself with enlightening his neighbors on political subjects; he was fast becoming a respected authority on such subjects in the neighborhood.

The change was as great in Kate as in any of them. She was then in her seventeenth year, and had laid aside her old tom-boy ways. Her association with business people was fast maturing her into a woman with a mature business-like way which was vastly becoming; and although her face wore a healthy shade of tan, yet the sparkle of her bright dark eyes and her quick winning smile won her many friends. She was quite tall and graceful, and she sat Doll in her new saddle as easily as any cow-boy ever rode. Her coarse blue denim dress fitted her slender figure perfectly. It was the first dress she had ever had made, but she was determined to have at least one dress made right, and as it had to answer for both street and riding costumes she felt some pride in its appearance; although it was of coarse material in order to stand the wear and tear of the swift rounding-up of the cattle over fallen trees and logs and among the brush of the choppings.

Doll had readily learned the business and easily brought the cattle into line without the touch of the rein, leaving her rider free to use her long-lashed whip over the backs of the laggards. She was growing fat and sleek; having plenty of grain and the best of feed, for as she earned the most of the living she was not stinted in the least. She repaid it well in her strength and endurance.

Kate did the business of the family and was fast becoming an adept in collecting small bills. She did the marketing also, carrying home at night what articles she could on horseback; and often driving her cattle into town with a basket of eggs on her arm, priding herself on not breaking one.

Life ran smoothly for her during the season; in sunshine or in storm she was always on time; and though the discomforts of her life were many she scarcely heeded them, for all were earning and the little children were assured of the comforts of life.

Haying time had come again, and they had a goodly amount of hay stored in the barn and fine growing crops outside. One day in the beginning of August every one but Kate was surprised to see a farmer drive up and unload three fine pigs into the sty. "Why child," exclaimed her father in surprise, "what on earth are you going to do with them? you know how your mother has always acted about hogs, refusing to have one on the place."

"That I care nothing about," the girl answered loftily. "I am a business woman, and do not expect to get rich by sentiment. We would have been better off long ago, pa, if you would have used your own judgment a little. I got these pigs cheap, and I intend to have two of them salted down for winter and the other kept. Now that Liny is fresh and the calf weaned, they can have the milk and will do nicely. We can't afford to pay twelve cents a

pound for salt pork; and we used to never have lard or fresh meat unless our neighbors gave us a little, till this summer; and next winter when we won't be earning we won't be able to buy all our meat either. Now that I earn a share of the living I shall do all I can to make it honest and to get ahead, and we shall raise pigs and calves and chickens, herd cows, and care for the crops until we have enough to buy this farm; and I might as well tell you that I want to buy that speckled cow of Lee's. We can get her for twenty dollars, as they are going to move and want to sell badly. She will give milk all winter. Now you needn't say that we won't have hay enough, for we will; we have five tons in the barn, and plenty of cornstalks, and corn enough besides to fat the pigs and feed the chickens, and I guess we shall save enough this summer to buy Doll's grain, but it has taken almost everything to get the things we needed, for we needed so many things."

Mr. Ford looked at her admiringly as she talked in her pompous fashion, as mature as if she was a capitalist with a fortune in her hands.

"What a business head you have, Kate! you are like my sister Eliza. She could always see where to make a dollar; but you are nothing of a scholar as Minnie is; or a dreamer like Kirt."

"If I was I believe we would starve," she interrupted dryly. Her father laughed and went on:

"Yes, we have done well, little girl, and I think we shall come out all right; for we have

two months more to earn with the cattle, and at the end of that time I shall have some crops to turn off. You three children have helped amazingly."

"Yes, I know. Guess ma isn't sorry now that she had a big family. Minnie used all of her wages in getting clothing for us girls and ma, and bedding and dishes; and although we haven't anything nice to wear yet, nor anything but a cheap set of dishes yet we are the best off we've ever been; and we have that little road-cart, and a new harness for Doll, and a good shepherd dog which we had to have to help Carlo, although he *did* cost ten dollars; and each of us three have had good rain-coats, as we had to be out in all weathers, and you and Kirt have good clothes besides, and we have all had a good living. O! the money has all gone in some useful way, but it would take another summer just like this to give us money ahead."

"Yes; and a buggy, so that your mother could go to 'meeting.' She won't ride in the road-cart; thinks it wicked; and as for the lumber-wagon, the only other means we had, that is out of the question."

"Yes; I know, the road-cart is sinful, but we could not afford anything else. She will have to wait a spell. Minnie says she will buy a cutter this winter, and then she can go to the Chapel if she wants to; but I shan't go with her for I am too full of sin. Let's go in, pa, Minnie has dinner ready, and I want to tell ma about the pigs. Don't say a word. I'll manage

it. I'll tell her this is the firm of 'Kate & Co.,' and she will have to agree."

The summer waned into autumn, and Minnie went back to her school and Kate once more put the washing out, as she could not do that work and take care of the cattle too. Mrs. Graves had been all that a mother could be to her; and besides had taught her how to sew neatly, and great was her pride when she was able to make pretty dresses for the little girls, and sew on plain clothes for the rest of the family. As for Foreman Dick, she said but little about him, only blushing rosy red whenever his name was mentioned; and Kate seeing the symptoms would shrug her shoulders disdainfully. One day she said a little spitefully:

"Well, Minnie can fall in love if she wants to, and get married as soon as she pleases, but I have no time for such foolishness, for I have got a family on my hands."

"Shame on you, Kate Ford," Minnie retorted almost crying. "You know that if I can save my money this year I am going to school years before I marry any one; and you don't have the family to support either. If you hadn't such a mean tongue your friends would all be glad."

Kate made no reply to this outburst, but went on scrubbing the floor with great energy, while Minnie returned to her sewing with dignified silence.

When the first snowflakes fell and the cows were driven home for the last time, the family

settled down to enjoy the fruits of their hard-earned prosperity. They had a bountiful crop of potatoes, but that year there was no sale for them at any price, so they were safely stored in pits hoping for a good spring market. Winter vegetables they had in plenty, and with plenty of their own meat they would not become penniless before spring, even though there was little they could earn during the winter months.

Bessie began school in the fall at the little school-house a mile distant, and when cold weather came on Kirt carried her back and forth, while Kate devoted all her energies to house-keeping.

She took the lead in the housework; her mother, who was really not able to do the work, following, though much against her will, in Kate's lead; and when the housework was over for the day, spending the time in reading and meditation, while Kate adorned the house with the work of her nimble fingers. She was fast learning to sew; but in mending and darning she had a veritable gift, delighting to mend; and woe to every rent which appeared, for it was immediately vanquished. A neighboring woman had taught her how to make rugs, and during the stormy winter days she worked busily converting the old worn carpets into bright rugs which made bright carpets for the sitting-room and bed-rooms; and with the mended and newly varnished pieces of furniture and the new dark green shades at the windows, which Minnie had bought, the little frame house wore a very

cheery appearance. Its evenings were made bright and cheery by a supply of new lamps, whose chimneys Kate kept dazzlingly clean, replacing the smoky, ill-smelling affairs of former days.

Mr. Ford had taken a great interest in local politics, and at the school-meeting in his district he had been elected director, which was considered quite an elevation by Mrs. Ford, and covered a multitude of sins; but her conscience was quite troubled over Minnie's fine clothes, and she rankled in her spirit over the sin of wearing flowers as ornaments and having trimmings on her dresses; but the three black and white tips on her winter hat was the greatest sin of all; but the girl was sin-hardened and quietly persisted in dressing, as far as her means afforded, like other teachers of her class. Kate too had followed her sister's example, and wore a very becoming suit to the little white church in town where she preferred to go; but it was not a Free Methodist, although she would drive her mother to the Chapel after Minnie had purchased the new cutter, and then go on to her church with Irene.

It was a great trial to Mrs. Ford to see all of the children turning from their childhood's teachings, and she lay all the blame on Kate's shoulders. Mr. Ford, when he went at all went to the elegant Presbyterian, in whose faith he had been brought up. Bessie wanted to go to the Sunday School in the district, so Kirt went with her there; and the girls and Irene went to

still another when Minnie was home to go 'with them.

It was a happy winter; the little girls played with their kittens and dollies during the long evenings, while Kirt played on the violin and Mr. Ford studied politics. During the day he and his son got up a larger woodpile than they had ever been known to have before; and as Kate managed to make the hens lay abundantly, and Minnie was earning good wages they came out in the spring, as Kate expressed it, square with the world.

The first of May found them back at their old employment, but this year they had the biggest herd in town, numbering over fifty cattle—an income of over twenty-five dollars a week; but with the increased numbers came the necessity of two town boys hired to take the cattle out in the morning and replace them at night; but as the cows came from several parts of the town it was no easy task to take them out and handle them safely through the streets of the town; but Kate, mounted on sure-footed Doll guided them with all the assurance of an army officer, while the two boys and Kirt obeyed her slightest command. Mr. Ford assisted with a few of the most unruly creatures with the aid of the new dog; which, with Carlo, enabled Kirt to keep them all in range during the day.

Minnie had invested a good share of her winter's wages in a team, and Mr. Ford went to work with a will in the spring, hiring a man during the rush of the busy season. The fall be-

fore he had put in a goodly piece of rye and wheat, and as it promised well he was greatly encouraged. He still had a pit of fine potatoes left over from last year's crop, and he announced his intention of planting but a small crop that year as it did not pay.

But Kate persisted that it was no sign because they had not paid one year that they would not the next, and insisted that he should plant every one that he could spare; and at last she had her own way, as she always did, and he planted five acres, grumbling all the time that it was time and money thrown away to care for so many which would only rot in the pit; but his self-willed daughter only informed him that she was earning the living for him, while he worked the farm for her, and instead of being angry at her saucy speech he only laughed, and named her the "Little Boss."

But as he was a man who delighted in being looked up to, he soon enjoyed the notoriety of having the biggest potato patch in town; and as he had been elected path-master in the spring, and was constantly quoted as an authority on politics, Mrs. Ford was becoming quite reconciled to his farming, as he was getting back into politics again.

CHAPTER XIV.

Kirt's New Friend.

Kate was counting up the cattle one bright afternoon in the summer of her second season. She stood in the stirrup slowly numbering them over. Fifty-five, fifty-six, fifty-seven, fifty-eight, fifty-nine, sixty, sixty—but no sixty was in sight. There were black cows, red cows, white cows, brindles, Jerseys, and cows of every conceivable description but not one pure white creature to be seen, and that was the missing sixty.

“Well Kirt,” she said at last, turning to her brother who stood on a stump with a field glass in his hand, “I can’t see old Smithy anywhere, can you? she has gone again for sure. I almost wish we had never taken her. She gives us more trouble than any or all of the rest. When did you see her last?”

“About half an hour ago, just before you came. She was feeding with the rest all right.”

“Oh, she has watched her chance and gone for the Dooley place again, and I shall have a pretty chase if I find her on Barn Hill and get her back by five o’clock. You keep the glass so as to watch the rest, and Burny will keep them in range while I take Carlo,” and whistling for the

dog she was off with a parting hand-wave to Kirt and the little girls.

"It is too bad that I let her get away," the boy thought regretfully, "but I thought she was in sight. Kate was good not to scold about it," and with these thoughts he picked up his violin and began tuning the strings, while Burny, thoroughly understanding his business wandered among the cattle, keeping a watchful eye that no more should get away.

The little girls had come out with Kate, and now busied themselves in gathering the wild flowers which grew around the banks of the grassy little pond, where the cattle had learned to congregate every night preparatory to being driven to town. After they had picked all they wished they sat down by Kirt's side, and with a large bouquet of pond lilies which he had gathered they wove pretty garlands of the sweet blossoms, and crowned themselves with them. They were the dear little fairies of the woodlands in Kirt's eyes, innocent and fair as the lilies with which they adorned themselves. The bright, dark eyes of Irene had not lost any of their sparkle or of their brightness in the three years of discipline she had undergone under Kate's careful training; but had developed into being a generous, obedient child, the little darling and pet of all, complete pattern in miniature of her energetic sister. While Bessie, sweet, gentle and gay as ever, showed marked tendencies of Minnie's studiousness combined with Kirt's music.

These little ones bid fair to excel their older sisters, both in manners and in beauty, for in them the good and beautiful was cultivated day by day; and their lives were all sunshine, not being subject to the management of one who had never learned to control herself.

The care of the children had been the best discipline Kate could have received, for she quickly learned that in order to control and guide others, one must learn to control oneself first; so she strove hard to make herself what she wished them to be, and unconsciously they followed her example; and now as they sat there by the water's edge, laughing and chatting in childish glee, the snowy blossoms mingling with the dark curls of Irene and the brown ringlets of Bessie, and drooping down on their pink cheeks, two fairer little maidens would have been hard to find than the once neglected Ford children.

Mr. Norton's carriage rolled silently over the sandy road stretching through the pine chop-pings toward the little pond. A merry party of ladies filled the carriage. By his side sat his mother, a sweet-faced old lady who was sadly viewing the barren acres.

"What is it, mother? What is troubling your gentle spirit and making you sad this fair summer day?" asked her son, noticing the shadow on her face.

"I was thinking, Henry," she answered, "what a barren waste this is. When I was here before we drove over this very road; but the pines were here then, and so grandly beau-

tiful they were too; so tall and large it made me dizzy to look to the tops of them; and their great green branches were always moving and moaning, singing their own requiem, I believe; and the air was sweet and pure, laden with the fragrance of the pine. But now they are gone, and as far as the eye can see, looking in this direction, there are nothing but these rolling hills, disfigured by blackened stumps and straggling trees—mere ruins of the past grandeur of the forest. Alas! it seems a sin to destroy such glorious works of nature; but man is king over the forest and his greed for gold must be satisfied.”

“Why, mother,” replied her son laughingly, “how hard you are on us lumbermen. Now you must admit that it is through the woodman’s axe that civilization marches forward.”

“That is so,” assented the old lady with a sigh, “but there never seems to be many settlers in these old pineries.”

“No; the settlers prefer the hard wood lands, but they are much more fruitful. This stretch of pineries here contains hundred of acres, and just on the edge is a fine belt of hardwood. It seems to be in streaks. These pineries are very useful for grazing lands as the pony grass is excellent feed. But now we are coming in sight of Grassy Pond; it is like an oasis in a desert and is a really beautiful spot.”

Soon they mounted a little hill commanding a view of the pond and Mr. Norton checked the horses that they might have a good view of the

beautiful sheet of sparkling water, dimpling and glistening in the slanting rays of the afternoon sun, framed in its background of dark green tamarack and cedar trees, that cast their long shadows across its breast; while its surface cradled hundreds of snowy lilies lifting their golden cups heavenward, reflecting back their own loveliness in the depths of the cool dark water below.

Near the edge of the land, standing knee-deep in the water, lazily chewing their cud, and whipping the flies from their sleek sides with their tails, were dozens of cattle, while on all sides of the pond were others either contentedly grazing or lying at their ease, while no sound broke the stillness of the Sabbath afternoon but the tinkling of the bells, coming to them across the water. They had not yet observed the three as they sat quietly enjoying the beauty of the scene, Mr. Norton telling them of Kate and her unique business, when suddenly the strains of the violin floated above the tinkle of the bells, soft and low at first, until it swelled into the magnificent chord of the Ninety and Nine. A moment later and they heard a boy's voice singing:

“There were ninety and nine that safely lay,
In the shelter of the Fold.
But one was out, on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold.
Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the tender shepherd's care;
Away from the tender shepherd's care.

“Lord, thou hast here thy ninety and nine,
Are they not enough for thee?
But the shepherd made answer: This of mine
Has wandered away from me.

And although the road be rough and steep,
I must go to the desert to find my sheep.
I must go to the desert to find my sheep.

“But none of the ransomed ever knew,
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed
through
Ere he found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert he heard its cry,
Sick and helpless and ready to die;
Sick and helpless and ready to die.

“Lord, whence are those blood drops all the way
That mark out the mountain's track?
They were shed for one who had gone astray,
Ere the shepherd could bring him back.
Lord whence are thy hands so rent and torn?
They were pierced to-night by many a thorn;
They were pierced to-night by many a thorn.

“But thro' the mountains thunder-riven,
And up thro' the rocky steep,
There rose the glad cry to the gates of Heaven:
Rejoice! I have found my sleep!
And the Angels echoed around the Throne,
Rejoice! for the Lord brings back his own
Rejoice! for the Lord brings back his own.”

The voice ceased its song and the last triumphant note died away across the pond, and echoed back from the distant hills; but the boy still sat motionless, his fair face uplifted, touched with roseate beauty by the rays of the sun, his hair tossed by the light breeze, and shining like a crown above his white brow, while the little flower-wreathed girls at his feet gazed at him adoringly.

For some moments no one in the carriage spoke. In their hearts the grand melodious voice still vibrated, in the words of the magnificent hymn which had touched each heart with new beauty and meaning; the lady broke the silence by saying:

“Henry, who is that boy and those dear little flower-wreathed girls? I never heard such a voice before in my life from a boy!”

“Neither did I,” another said warmly. “I never was so stirred before. His soul went out in his words with a pathos I cannot describe;” her voice trembling as she spoke.

Mr. Norton had sat like one entranced. He now aroused himself and said:

“It is no other than Kirt Ford, the cattle-herder. It is he and his sister who have charge of all these cattle. I have known the boy two years, but I never dreamed that in such an humble unassuming lad there was such a wondrous singer. I must speak to him, but it seems a pity to disturb that beautiful picture. The little girls are as lovely as fairies.”

“Say rather as angels. A trio of angels would describe the picture well,” said his mother as he left the carriage.

They had not noticed the approach of the carriages, and Mr. Norton went quietly up unobserved. He noticed for the first time, the boy's pure gentle face unstained by sin, and guileless of all vanity. His broad rimmed hat lay beside him on the ground; his light check shirt and blue overalls were spotlessly clean, while the hand that had mastered the violin was as small and shapely as a woman's though browned by many suns.

Burny's loud bark caused them to look up, and Mr. Norton stepped quietly forward with a pleasant greeting, and under plea of wishing

some lilies for the ladies, excused his presence and so relieved the boy's embarrassment. He chatted with the little girls until Kirt returned, and when he received the bouquet, he asked the boy to attend the special concert in St. John's Church that evening and hear the boys sing.

Kirt's face shone with pleasure. He had often longed to hear that choir and on some Sunday nights he had stood in the shade of the great building and listened to the music of the pipe-organ, mingling with the voices of a score of boy singers, but never had he dared to venture within the stately edifice.

But when Mr. Norton urged his invitation, telling him to meet him on the church steps and sit with him during the evening, where he could have a chance to hear all that music, it was a greater favor than he had ever expected. But he readily promised to hasten through his work and be there on time.

"But you are late to-night, are you not?" said Mr. Norton; "you are usually at my house by six, and it is now nearly five. But here comes your sister; where has she been?"

Kirt told him of the missing cow, adding that the circumstance made him think of the hymn.

"It was beautifully sung, and afforded us a great deal of pleasure to hear you. What a fine equestrian your sister is! It makes but little difference to her, seemingly, what motion or speed her horse is giving, she rides with the same graceful ease," he said admiringly, as the girl came in sight, her slight girlish form swing-

ing lightly in the saddle as Doll alternately trotted and galloped over logs and uneven ground, now leaping a fallen tree, or dashing away after a straggling cow, then coming quietly down upon a walk behind the slow moving herd, which was forming in a long line, the truant white cow slowing walking with the rest; all being marshalled into order by the watchful barking of the dogs, and the clear ringing voice of Kate as she gave her orders to her canine helpers.

“Our Kate could be nothing but a good rider, for she gives her whole life to anything she attempts,” answered the boy proudly, and after bidding Mr. Norton good-bye and promising to be on time, he hastened forward to his sister, eager to tell her of the great pleasure in store for him.

The girl was delighted, and said joyfully that she always knew that some day someone beside herself would appreciate Kirt, and now Mr. Norton had noticed him she was sure that others would. And she arranged, with her father's help, to put up half of Kirt's cattle, so that he would have plenty of time to return home and make ready for the evening.

The silvery chimes of St. John's Church were pealing forth their gladsome melody as Kirt mounted the great stone steps and joined Mr. Norton. He was neatly clothed in a gray suit, and the fastidious gentleman could find no fault with his appearance. They entered the magnificent auditorium, Kirt's heart beating wildly at

the sight of so many strange faces and so much wealth and elegance; and he took his seat with Mr. and Mrs. Norton, feeling very much out of place and bewildered. The glare of the electric lamps blinded him and the soft elegance and drapery of the furnishing revealed a world of new beauty to him.

But himself and his surroundings were totally lost sight of at the first notes from the melodious organ; and when it pealed forth the first chords of a glorious anthem, and the white-robed boys arose and sang, he sat like one entranced, scarcely breathing, until the services were ended.

The ever changing emotions of his soul were depicted on his face, and his friend, sitting silently by, narrowly watched the effect the music had on him. But when they were out in the cool night air, and Kirt had said, in reply to the gentleman's question as to how he had enjoyed himself, that it had seemed like Heaven and he could never thank him enough for the pleasure, that it would be something to dream of forever, Mr. Norton had said nothing, but only asked him to call at his office at three the next afternoon.

Kate was waiting for him, and when he entered, so full of the music he had heard that he had noticed neither his long lonely walk nor the intense darkness of the night, she knew without asking that he had had his soul's desire gratified.

"I would have given anything if you had

been there, Kate. I never knew boys could sing like that. But some night I shall go again and you shall go with me. I think I can play the chords of the anthems. Let me try," and taking his violin he played softly for several minutes, then went to bed, too happy to rest.

Promptly at three the next afternoon he presented himself at Mr. Norton's office, and there found several gentlemen awaiting him—the rector of the church, and a German who had once been pointed out to the boy as a great violinist, were among the number. Mr. Norton at once brought forward a fine violin, and handing it to Kirt asked him to play and sing the piece he had sung the day before.

Kirt took it with nervous hands, feeling very shabby and commonplace among so many gentlemen, and evidently the object of interest to them; but as he raised the instrument to his breast, and tried it to see if it was in tune, his embarrassment left him, and he played and sang as he never had done before. His heart went out with each swelling chord of the grand old hymn, and for the time he was lost in the land of music, following the Shepherd over the wilds, in search of the stray lamb. And with the last grand notes "Rejoice! for the Lord brings back his own!" he laid the instrument down, and was surprised to see the rector and Mr. Norton wiping the tears from their eyes, and the German professor blowing his nose vigorously, while he stammered in broken English that he had never heard anything so beauti-

ful before, and asked him to sing and play again.

He complied with his request, playing several selections that he knew, and at last one of the anthems he had heard the night before. He finished, fearing that he had played too long, and the spell on all was broken. He received their praises in silence, not dreaming that he had done anything wonderful. At last the rector inquired:

“Who taught you how to sing and play, my boy?”

“God and the birds,” he answered, looking at him earnestly.

“But surely you have had some instruction. You must know the rudiments of music?”

“No sir; I never had any instruction. I know nothing of music, only what is within me, and that which is everywhere in nature. When I was a small boy, I got a violin, and I have played on that, but it is nothing to this,” touching the elegant instrument reverently as he spoke.

His reply was a surprise to all, but the gentleman asked again: “But you would like a teacher, would you not? you would like instructions about the violin.”

“Oh, better than anything else; and some day I shall have. I was hoping to take lessons of this gentleman another year,” turning to the professor, who asked:

“How would you like to join our boys’ choir, and come every week to practice with them,

and besides have a violin to use at your home?"

The boy's eyes sparkled; but he doubted if he could have heard aright.

"To join the boys' choir of St. John's Church?" he repeated slowly.

"Yes," Mr. Norton replied, noting the boy's astonishment, and fearing lest he should refuse, he hastened to say:

"We have a fund for educating poor boys, and all we would require of you would be to sing in our church, and that necessarily would not take much of your time from your work. You have a wonderful voice, simply wonderful, Kirt, and it must not be lost to the world for want of a chance; and after this you must consider us all your friends, who will help you to your proper place in the world. How old are you?"

"We, Kate and I, will be nineteen next fall."

"But your sister seems older than you. You do not look much over sixteen."

The boy's face flushed. "I am but a strippling, sir. Kate is so much more capable and clever than I that she has developed faster. We are both the same height, though we look so differently, and are so different. I wish I was like her."

Mr. Norton smiled. "You are very well as you are, my boy. Simply a mistake in nature, I see. The boy was the girl, and the girl the boy; but your sister is one to be proud of, too. My friend, the professor, wants to talk with you, and arrange for a series of violin lessons,

beginning with to-day, and you are to have this instrument for your exclusive use. You can make arrangements with him for the singing, as he is our choir-master, and beginning with next Sabbath evening, we shall expect to see you in our choir.

Kirt could not get away in time to assist with the cattle, as the German professor was loth to relinquish such a promising pupil; but Kate did his share of the work uncomplainingly, rejoicing more than he did himself over his success. It was everything to her that he was appreciated. She saw it in a different light than her mother did. She saw Kirt under the influence of educated, refined people, mingling in a society which she longed to enter, but from which she was hopelessly debarred; but she bore her deprivation bravely, and toiled on, gladly giving Kirt off from his duties in the field, going herself to the pasture to watch the cattle when it was necessary for him to be away; and taking her sewing with her, she contrived to take many necessary, needed stitches, seated on Doll's back with her work securely held in an old-fashioned saddle satchel fastened to her saddle; while Minnie took care of the house when she was there, and when she was away, the girl managed as best she could, for she could neither afford hiring anyone in the house or a boy in Kirt's place, for it was the aim of the three young folks to buy the place in the fall.

The season of hardship and toil passed away while she led her hard, lonely life, with no society

or friends but those she made in the business world; for Kate Ford was intensely proud, and particular as to whom she called a friend. The stern lessons she had learned in early life of poverty, and smooth-tongued, false-hearted friendship, had made her withdraw from the friendly advances of strangers and seek her happiness in doing for others, and in caring for the little home which was heaven itself to her.

Keenly she felt the position she occupied in the eyes of the world, and she knew that she was not considered a lady by society, nor ever could be while she drove the city cattle through the streets, and dauntlessly entered the stables of the rich and poor alike, stantialling cows night and morning; but in the kindness of her heart, her courage and honesty, there was not a truer lady in town than she, and she proudly declared that while her work, menial as it was, darkening her face and hardening her hands, prevented her from entering good society, she would have none.

The whole of the family were vastly proud of Kirt with the exception of Mrs. Ford, who, poor woman, could see nothing but ruin and perdition in her son's singing in a High Church 'Piscopal Meetin' House, and wearing a long white night-gown, while the preacher was decked out in robes and finery; and a church building that cost a fortune, with a great high steeple on it and a gilded cross on top, making them as bad as the Catholics; and besides a congregation which danced, played whist, went to theatres and wore elegant

gowns and trimmed bonnets as well as saying prayers through Lent; and observing Easter was a heinous crime in her eyes. Oh, it was something dreadful for the good woman to bear; but trouble seldom kills, and so she lived through this, the greatest trial she had ever known; but she had the satisfaction of laying all the blame on Mr. Ford and on Kate who bossed everything.

Mr. Ford was as proud of his son's success, as the mother was displeased, and for a time he built roseate air-castles of Kirt's future greatness, declaring that one boy was worth more than any number of girls to make a man rich.

Kate and Minnie laughed a little over this, but said nothing for they were equally proud of him, and although they had been the main standbys of the family in their poverty, and were yet working hard, they were willing he should take the glory in their father's eyes as long as their mother was so opposed.

Neither would venture into St. John's Church dressed as they were, and so they invested in suits they would never have dared to think of until this present emergency, and went every Sunday to Saint John's Church to hear Kirt sing, unknown to the majority, except as the beautiful tenor's sisters; a reflected honor which they were proud to bear.

CHAPTER XV.

The Reward of Labor.

Fall had come again, and for the second season the cattle herding had stopped. Kate had kept a faithful account of the money earned, and triumphantly announced that six hundred dollars had been taken in; with about a hundred for expenses, leaving a neat little margin for their six months' work.

"Who says that cattle herding doesn't pay?" she demanded triumphantly. "I was speaking with Mr. Norton about it lately and he says that every one is astonished at our success, and many are envious. He also said that we had made a good many friends by our energy; but I don't think of that so much, only what we have got ahead. I never believed when we lived in the Higgins Settlement that we should ever have so much money."

"And it hasn't all been spent either," said her father, "though lots of it has gone for things for the house and farm; two new stoves, a buggy, plough, potato digger, double harness, feed cutter, sitting-room carpet, bedroom set, sewing machine, and a one horse rake, have taken a

good share, to say nothing of our clothing and living."

"Yes: but not a cent has gone foolishly," said Kate, "and only think, two years ago now we were so poor that we thought living over here by the camps would make us rich," Kate answered joyously; "and next year we shall have more cattle, and do still better. But the best of all is Kirt's good luck, and Minnie being in the same school and getting better pay."

It was a wild November evening, drear enough outside, but bright and warm in their sitting-room. The little room was daintily furnished, with lace curtains at the windows, a bright carpet, some new pieces of furniture, and nice pictures on the walls. Minnie was home from her school, looking very dignified and scholarly, with her gold glasses, which Kate insisted she wore just for style, but which were very becoming to her nearly twenty years' youthfulness; wearing them, as Kirt said teasingly, because Dick Graves thought them becoming; a heinous offense were the glasses in her mother's eyes.

Kirt sat in the bay window with his new violin, occasionally drawing the bow across the strings. He had improved vastly in manners and appearance since his association with the church people and musicians; and Kate was already planning to do without him another year, and let him devote his entire time to study, under the German musician, Mr. Norton's friend. But his honors and advancement had not spoiled him. His fair young face had not lost its

thoughtfulness, nor his great dreamy eyes their expression. The whole family were vastly proud of him but none idealized him as Kate did. She was willing to be nothing, that he might succeed. Bessie, just seven, was like Kirt, and seated in a low chair by his side was taking her first lesson on a violin, her chubby chin resting lovingly on it, her tiny hand drawing the bow, and a very serious expression on her baby face.

Minnie and Kate looked at them lovingly; and the older sister whispered that she could buy an organ that winter so that Bessie could begin to learn to play.

Mrs. Ford sat in the warmest corner by the Oakland heater, shivering at the wind outside, while she glanced occasionally at a book of meditations on her lap. Mr. Ford sat at the table working industriously at a column of figures. When he had finished the sum he looked up at Kate, who sat by the kitchen door industriously chopping a great bowl of mincemeat for their Thanksgiving pies, while Minnie sat near paring apples, greatly hindered by Irene's little fingers. After a pause he said:

"Then you think we had better sell the potatoes for fifty cents a bushel now, Kate, than try and keep them over."

"I do," she replied emphatically; "they may fall in price before spring or else freeze in the pit, for this is going to be a dreadful winter; and now when we can get seven hundred and fifty dollars for fifteen hundred bushels I think we

had better let them go. The buyer will be here Monday again. That will nearly pay for the farm; and Kirt, Minnie and I, have together saved four hundred and fifty dollars from our year's work, and the ten pigs we sold this week brought another hundred; so we can pay the thousand dollars cash for the farm, and you know that includes the forty acres of hard wood, which you can lumber off or else sell standing; and after the farm is paid for we will have three hundred dollars left to buy other things, a mowing machine, cultivator, another cow, and such things that we need. And we, Kirt, Minnie and I, think we had better do it now, as we may not have such a good chance again, or the potato crop may not amount to so much another year."

"That is just the trouble I see," observed her father doubtfully. "We may not get more than ten cents a bushel another year; we couldn't get that last year; and so I think that we had better not invest in this country, but go out to Dakota, and take up a homestead, where I can grow up with the country, and become a leading politician. Now, if I sit here I have no chance against the rich mugwumps, but out there it would be different. Yes: that would be according to my judgment exactly; and when I go up town I shall send for books and pamphlets, so I can choose a location, and we can start in the spring with a covered wagon, and the horses could take us there in about thirty days. Kirt can drive the stock through, and the animals can graze all the way and it

will not cost a cent to feed them, for they can keep themselves that way. And besides the journey would be only a pleasure, driving slow and seeing all the country: and it would not cost over twenty dollars to go through, for we can camp by the roadside nights and cook our meals over a fire, and when we got there we would have a thousand dollars to use, and in a year's time we could make at least ten thousand on wheat, for wheat here is but a poor crop at best. I only raised enough this year to furnish our flour for—”

“Fiddlesticks!” broke in Kate just as he got warmed to a lecturer's tone, and his castle in Spain all done but the cornice. “We will do no such thing. I thought, pa, you had left all of your wild-goose schemes behind in Higgins Hollow, and were not going to spend your days in dreaming and wondering; waiting for the goose to lay the golden eggs, and now, just when you've got the goose, to kill her, and so spoil everything. No, pa, I do not mean to be saucy or bossy, either; but we are going to buy this farm even if potatoes are not worth anything again for fifteen years. I can herd cattle, and raise stock; next year we shall raise twenty-five calves anyway, instead of two as we did this; and the farm will provide our living anyway; if we use our brains while we work, we can get ahead,” and Kate paused for breath, too full of indignation to say another word, her dark eyes flashing and her cheeks aglow with pent up feelings, for in her father's scheme she saw but a renewal of bygone misery.

Mrs. Ford took advantage of Kate's silence and began :

"Now Andrew, I think I ought to have *my* say. You and Kate have both had yours, and it is my turn. I sha'n't go cart-horseing off to Dakota on any foolish scheme you might bring up ; neither shall I stay on this old farm. *Farm*, indeed ! Nothing but a clearing in a lot of pine stumps ! I say let us go back to Pennsylvania where I can go to meetings and bring up my little lambs in the fold. Here they go to Baptist Sunday School and are being taught false doctrine in their innocence ; and I have no control over them, for Kate goes to the Baptist Church in town, and Kirt goes to that wicked 'Piscopals, which aint no better than Catholics, and will take Bess with him when she's older ; and there's Minnie, she cares nothing for my religion ; and she's turned psychic like Dick Graves, which is nothing but Spiritualists after all, and they are the *worst folks* on earth ; the very worst ;" and her eyes rested angrily on Minnie's glasses. Pausing only to take breath she went on :

"You dragged your family off here into the woods, and you are to blame for their forsaking the religion of their fathers ; away from all church privileges ; and to blame for Minnie caring only for golden ornaments and fine clothes and dressing the children up like puppets, for it's vanity, vanity, nothing but vanity. Kate there is the black sheep of the family. She bosses us all, and she *will* do the awful cattle-herding and work on Sundays ; and she don't care any-

thing for any church, she says so, only to hear Kirt sing in that wicked place. His old violin will be the ruin of him, body and soul. You say you don't care which church the children go to, they ought to be left alone in such matters; and so you go among the stiff-necked and ungodly Presbyterians, and pay no attention to the welfare of your children's souls; that shows how wicked you are. No, you had better mend your ways while it is time, Andrew Ford. The Lord has prospered you, and now it is your place to forsake your worldly ways and return to the land of your fathers."

"We can buy the farm, I suppose," interrupted her husband, anxious to get Kate started again so as to out talk his wife, but Mrs. Ford was not to be out talked at present and she began again quickly:

"You will do just as you like of course, for you never would take my advice, but Andrew Ford, remember Jonah of old, he forsook the path of the Lord and the Lord cursed him. You have talents, and God fore-ordained and predestinated that you should be a leader in Pennsylvania politics; and when you came out here and went to bushwhacking His curse followed you. Now Jonah would not return to Nineveh as God commanded him to do; and so he got into a boat and started off; but the boatmen did not like him and so they threw him overboard and a whale swallowed him and he lay in the whale's belly three nights and three days, and then the whale vomited him out on shore. Then Jonah

went to farming and raised a gourd, and the gourd vine grew to a great height and sheltered him from the sun. And it made him content to stay and not return to Nineveh; but a cut-worm gnawed down the root, and the vine withered and died; and that is just what you are doing and have done. You dragged your family out here against the Lord's will. Your own party were the boatmen, and they threw you overboard; and the whale was the poverty you brought on your family. Then you came up here and went to farming, and your potato patch is the gourd vine, and it makes you content to stay here, but mark my words, a cut-worm will gnaw at the roots and the vine will wither and die;" and the excited woman shook her finger wrathfully at her husband who sat dazed and helpless beneath his wife's eloquence.

Kate laughed outright as her mother finished speaking and then said:

"Now ma, I want to tell you my version of Jonah. He was a Free Methodist, that is, he had a free method of his own, and he would not preach God's truth in Nineveh, and so he started to go where he could find some folks he could make Methodists of. But while he was on the boat he kept telling the sailors how good he was, and that he had never committed any sin; and by and by when it stormed they thought such a good person must have been the cause and as they were tired of him they threw him overboard; but a whale that had been following the ship took him at his word and swallowed him,

believing him 'good'; but he was not as good as he had represented himself to be, and lay so heavy on the whale's stomach that the poor fish was glad to get rid of him. But when poor Jonah found himself on land once more, having failed twice in making a favorable impression on his fellow-travelers, he decided to be an honest man and do as God commanded all men to do,—to till the soil and earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; so as you say he went to farming and planted a gourd vine, and it grew and grew until it could grow no taller; but he was lazy like the rest of his class, and did not take care of his crops, and a cut-worm gnawed off the root and it died. Now I think there is a good lesson there for pa to learn; to earn his own living as God commanded men to do, and not to go tramping over the country, buying votes and making stump speeches and playing sweet to his enemies in order to get their votes, and trusting his bread to whatever popularity he may have. He should till the soil and keep the ground stirred up around the roots so the vermin won't destroy his labors."

"But," her mother interrupted, eager to put in a word, "he would not have to work for a living if he would do as God commanded. If he would only get religion, and devote his life to prayer and sanctification he would be taken care of. He should take no thought of the morrow, for the Lord will provide. There was Elijah in the wilderness, starving and dying of thirst, but he was directed to the water, and

God sent him food by the ravens night and morning, and if your father would have followed the straight and narrow path of the Free Methodist, instead of being a worldly Presbyterian, he would never have been poor."

"I suppose," broke in her incorrigible daughter, "that you think that God sent the ravens to him loaded with bread and beef-steak, but he didn't do any such thing. The ravens came twice a day to drink, and Elijah did just what any other sensible man would have done in his place, he caught the birds and ate them,—just right too, for he saved his own life. And ma, you ought to know by this time that God only helps those who help themselves, and if we all hadn't worked as hard as we could we would have been as poor as Job's turkey; and if we hadn't stirred ourselves we would have been living yet in the Higgins Settlement—that is, if we hadn't starved to death, and Bessie and Irene would have been in the Leslie Home long ago; but as it is we are the best off of any of our neighbors, and have more money than the people in that God-forsaken country ever saw. And I believe that the Lord likes us better than if we were lazy. I am not much of a theologian, and I never want to be; but I am neither lazy nor shiftless."

Minnie saw that her mother was preparing a lengthy reply, so she hastened to say:

"You know, mamma, that I expect to get the appointment to the State Normal next year, and even if I do not I shall go, if the cattle pay well

again. I think the farm ought to be bought now, when we have the money. It is the best thing that ever happened to us, our losing everything as we did the last year we were in the Higgins Settlement."

"Indeed it was," assented Kate, "but it was very hard to endure, but then the darkest hour is always just before the dawning. I was so disappointed the day after the frost that I hardly wanted to live, but it was all in God's providence as I see now, for here is a chance for us all. Norton City, and Norton's camps have been our Mecca. Kirt will never find a better friend than Mr. Norton. He gets a salary now for singing in the choir, and it won't be many years before he will get a fine position, for everyone says he has such a beautiful tenor voice, and his violin playing is something wonderful for a boy,—"

"No more, Kate," broke in Kirt quickly, blushing like a girl, "why don't you praise Bess? she never gets a false note, and can run the scale as well as I can."

"Bess is all right," said Kate, nodding brightly at the brown-haired, brown-eyed little girl by her brother's side. "I expect she will astonish the world some day, but it's the present I'm thinking of. And here's Minnie. She's now teaching her seventh term in the same school and gets thirty-five instead of twenty-five dollars, and Mr. Norton told me that when she graduates from the State Normal, she should have a position in the city schools. And here's

pa; he has a good chance here in politics and is as respected as anybody, and it would be the height of foolishness to throw this all up, and go either to Dakota or to Pennsylvania, and if we are wise, we'll stay here where we all can amount to something; that is all but me, for I'm no genius, only a worker and planner—the 'black sheep' of the family that works on Sundays, and whistles like a tom-boy; but that's all the music I have. I can neither play nor sing but I can whistle. Irene and I will have to work out our own salvation, I guess, for we haven't any gifts, have we, darling, only lots of self-will?" and she caught the little one in her arms and kissed her passionately to hide the tears which dimmed her eyes, for she did wish for a little appreciation from her mother.

Mrs. Ford was touched. "You're a good girl, Kate," she said tenderly, "and I won't say anything against your whistling, if you won't whistle when I want to read my 'Meditations.'"

There was silence for a moment, then Minnie said as she pared the last apple: "I shall always think that fire, frost, famine, and no work were pretty good things for us after all; but if it hadn't been for Kate, our little hustler, we would be there yet, I'm afraid; and if she has no professed religion, and goes every Sunday to St. John's just to hear Kirt sing, I think she has more Christianity than the rest of us, for Christianity is the Gospel of the Helping Hand."

"Yes, Kate is our backbone," admitted her father. "Now I think it is time to go to bed,

as we have listened to two sermons to-night; and Kate, I will write to Mrs. Stone Monday and make arrangements for the farm."

"O, will you?" the girl was radiant. "And now, I shall never regret any trouble that ever happened to us, as long as it got us out of the Higgins Settlement. It is just as you say, Kirt, all things work together for good."

The boy smiled, and lifting the violin to his breast, sang, Bess joining in sweetly:

"After long agonies,
Rapture and bliss.
Right was the pathway,
Leading to this.'"

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Ford Finds Favor in His Wife's Eyes at Last.

Kate was putting the little sitting-room to rights one bright morning the following April and talking to her father the while.

"We can't expect much help from Kirt this summer," she was saying, "for the church claims more and more of his time; it is concerts and musicals, and practice either with the choir or on the violin seven days out of the week, and I really can't get him interested in anything else. But then as long as he is getting his education free and has such a splendid opportunity we ought not to complain, and we can get along all right until he begins to earn for himself; that is, considerably more than he earns now."

"He isn't good for anything but music, and where he is now if things should take a bad turn why he would never amount to anything," said her father gloomily. He had another touch of the Dakota fever, and was not disposed to look on the bright side of affairs.

"You just wait and see," the girl replied with spirit. "We shall all be prouder of Kirt yet, than we have ever been. He is the

idol of every one already; nothing is complete without our Kirt, and the best of it all is that it does not spoil him at all. He is just the same dear boy as when he herded cows. Only think, that Mr. Norton is going to pay his expenses so he can go with the professor this week to Detroit, to hear that great violinist play. Isn't it wonderful he has such a chance? We can spare him all right I know. This will be our third season, and I already have about seventy cows engaged, and of course shall have more. I have made arrangements to hire four or five good boys, and as we own our home, and owe no man a cent, I shall simply direct the business this year, do my collecting, and oversee the boys. I think I have tied up my last cow in Norton City."

"But I thought I heard you say once," said her father jestingly, "that you were neither too proud nor too lazy to work."

"Neither am I," she retorted, "when it is necessary, and if the need was as great this year I would do as I always have done; but I am not obliged to this year, thank Heaven. But Kirt should have a chance, even if I went hungry. He is a genius, and all I am good for is to work; but this year I am going to work differently. While the boys take charge of the cattle I am going to raise stock, calves, lambs, pigs and poultry for the fall market, and also take better care of the home, while you run the farm, and there will be money enough for you to hire a man when you need one. I have worked too hard, pa, even if you do not know

it, and now I want a little chance for myself; so that I can develop the better part of my nature, and not grow like a miser, thinking only of the dollars and cents, growing narrower minded every day. Here are these little girls to go to school, and ma to look after. She is growing more helpless all the time. I see in a short time she will know but little, and as Minnie goes away to school this fall I must stay at home and take care of my family, and if I ever have a chance I must take it here at home."

Mr. Ford laughed, and said teasingly: "You are a very necessary personage, my dear, in your own estimation;" for although he was immensely proud of his daughter's ability, he would seldom admit to her that she was of much account.

Kate shrugged her shoulders at this remark, and as he left the room she remarked sagely that she guessed her place would be hard to fill, and she consoled herself in admiring the little sitting room; its bay window was tastefully filled with blooming plants, which she carefully tended—they were her especial pride; and the neat sweet-toned cottage organ, which Minnie had bought, and on which Kate was to begin to take lessons that summer. The organ was another cross to Mrs. Ford to bear, but Kate had religiously abstained from whistling in the house since the organ was bought, hoping thus to win her mother's approbation to its presence.

As her mother entered the room she said brightly: "I think we have the prettiest home

in town, ma; everything is so cozy and nice, now the walls have been whitewashed and papered; and when the house is painted this spring I would not exchange it for a palace."

"It is all very well," her mother rejoined dropping wearily into a chair, "but not half as nice as the old home in Pennsylvania, for that was in town, and this is in the country. I know I shall never be contented here where I see so much show and vanity."

Kate had been learning gentleness toward her mother, so instead of retorting, she simply said:

"Why, I thought you had changed your mind about this place since pa was elected supervisor, and had taken you to Quarterly Meeting."

"Well it is better than it used to be. Your father has turned from his evil ways at last. He is going back to politics, and he says I can give ten dollars to Elder Jones this year; and if your father keeps on I think they will run him for sheriff another year. It is a comfort to me to know that my prayers are answered at last."

"But I do wish," said Kate a little wistfully, as she plucked a yellow leaf from a plant, "that pa would give me credit for helping him out of his poverty in Higgins Settlement."

"You must not say one word against your father," said her mother angrily. "You never hear *me* say anything against him! you just remember how he has lifted us out of our poverty into this nice home, and given me a chance to go to meetings, and given Minnie and Kirt their chances too. You must never say a word

against him. He is a man among a thousand. He has gone into politics again."

Kate made no reply but went out of the room with her head high. "Better be that tune than the other," she thought, "but I wonder who did a good share of this lifting! But," and she addressed her image in the mirror in her own room, "Kate Ford, you have got to have a chance for yourself; for Minnie will come back from the Normal a lady, and Kirt is fast becoming a gentleman; and the children will grow up to be somebody; and now you *must* make a chance. You haven't got quite a big enough pat of butter yet to lift you out of the can, but you will if you keep on, you will. It is pretty near four years since I had my awakening, thanks to Mrs. Grimes; and now I have another, and that is, Kate Ford, you are going to make a lady of yourself, and have a chance." And with these words in her heart, she went downstairs, and to work.

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